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# **SAINTS, SINNERS AND BEECHERS**



Thomas K.  
Isabella  
James

William  
Catharine

Edward  
Lyman

Charles

Henry Ward  
Harriet

THE BEECHER FAMILY, 1865.

**SAINTS SINNERS  
and  
BEECHERS**



BY  
**LYMAN BEECHER STOWE**

*Illustrated*

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1935  
IVOR NICHOLSON AND WATSON  
LIMITED LONDON



Thomas K.  
Isabella  
James  
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Mary  
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THE BEECHER FAMILY, 1855.

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*Printed in the United States of America*

To

My sons, David and Robinson,  
who quite properly are not  
interested in ancestors."



## FOREWORD

THE title of this book is quoted from Dr. Leonard Bacon of New Haven, Connecticut, an intimate friend of the Beechers, who said during the early part of the second half of the nineteenth century that "this country is inhabited by saints, sinners and Beechers." There never was a Beecher who was pious or conventional enough to qualify as a saint, and yet they could hardly be confused with sinners since they were always pursuing them with a sharp stick.

Who knows whether the Beechers were good and great? I don't, but I do know they were amusing, lovable and outrageous.

They played a significant part in the transition from heaven and theology to this world and service.

Seldom, if ever, has there been a more striking example of effective parental influence than that exercised by Lyman Beecher over his seven sons and four daughters. If it is true, as Theodore Parker said, that he was "the father of more brains than any other man in America," it was equally true that those brains were used along lines which *he* laid down.

LYMAN BEECHER STOWE

November 15, 1933  
New York City

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November 15, 1933

New York City

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# SAINTS, SINNERS AND BEECHERS



# SAINTS, SINNERS AND BEECHERS

## CHAPTER I

DAVID BEECHER: 1738-1805

### A LEARNED BLACKSMITH

"COME in, Squire, right glad to see you," said David Beecher as he looked up from his anvil to see Congressman Roger Sherman standing on the threshold of his blacksmith shop. As the Congressman crossed the shop, Beecher hastily laid aside his great hammer and wiped his hands on his apron.

As they shook hands, Sherman responded, "Glad to see you, Mr. Beecher. You know I always calculate to see you as soon as I get home from Congress to talk over the particulars."

The two men then fell into a discussion of the latest clash between the great leaders, Hamilton and Jefferson. Before long they were joined by a group of farmers and a few artisans and shopkeepers. While they all expressed their views freely, it was noticeable that the Congressman was more interested in the blacksmith's opinion than in those of the others.

The blacksmith shop was at that time a focal point in the community, and when the blacksmith was a reader and thinker, as was David Beecher, it became, quite naturally, a forum for the hammering out of ideas under the heat of discussion just as the iron was hammered out under the heat of the forge. David Beecher had the reputation of being one of the best read men in New England. In his shop were discussed the conflicts with the royal governors, the encroaching acts of Parliament, such as the Stamp Act and the notorious duty on tea, the impressing of American sailors, the disputes with other colonies, and, finally, the ups and downs of the Revolu-

tion, followed by the problems over the Confederation, the Declaration of Independence, the adoption of the Constitution, and then the repercussions of the divergent lines of policy advanced by the two leaders, Jefferson and Hamilton. Such national subjects besides the local questions of crops, politics, religion and neighborhood gossip were habitually thrashed out in David Beecher's blacksmith shop.

Hence it is not surprising that no less a personage than the Honorable Roger Sherman, signer of the Articles of Confederation, the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution of the United States, after returning from Washington, made his first call on David Beecher, the blacksmith. We may be sure, too, that David Beecher returned the courtesy by calling on the Squire, as he was called by his neighbors, at his little store on Chapel Street opposite Yale College.

On his way to and from Sherman's store David couldn't have stopped at the bank or the library because New Haven had neither at that time, but he did drop in at Isaac Beers' store, in a corner of which was the post-office, to get his mail, and to look over the latest importations among the books. For Isaac Beers kept not only the best groceries, gin and brandy, but the best books. David Beecher, in happy ignorance that in the future his son, Lyman, was to initiate the temperance movement in America, no doubt felt free to buy the excellent brandy and gin. In any case, it may be safely assumed that the stores of Roger Sherman and Isaac Beers were among his favorite resorts.

In 1738, just one hundred years after the first Beechers landed in this country, David Beecher was born on the ancestral farm in New Haven, Connecticut—an hereditary blacksmith. His father and his grandfather before him had been blacksmiths. His anvil stood, as had theirs, on the stump of the great oak tree<sup>1</sup> under which in 1638 the Reverend John

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<sup>1</sup>Where this tree stood would now be the corner of George and College Streets, New Haven.

Davenport, a celebrated London dissenting minister, had preached in the new colony his first sermon from the fitting text, "Then was Jesus led up of the spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil."

David's grandfather, Joseph, was reputed to be so strong that he could pick up a barrel of cider and drink out of the bung-hole. His father, Nathaniel, was satisfied to lift a barrel of cider into a cart, but David had to content himself with lifting a barrel of cider and merely carrying it into the cellar. He was five feet seven and one-half inches in height and weighed between one hundred and forty and one hundred and fifty pounds—the exact height and weight of his son, Lyman, and his grandson, Henry Ward. Naturally, he was stronger than they because pounding an anvil is better exercise than pounding a pulpit. Up to this time the outstanding feats of the Beechers had been physical and their reputation parochial although, had David been educated, he would, in Lyman's opinion, have made his mark in the world.

David's great-grandfather, another Joseph, was a clock-maker. He made New Haven's first town clock.<sup>2</sup> This aptitude reasserted itself, six generations later, when Thomas K. Beecher, an amateur astronomer, became custodian of the town clock of Elmira, New York.

John, the great-great-great-grandfather of David, was the first of the Beechers in America. With his wife, Hannah, and their son, Isaac, he came to this country from Kent, England, in 1637, with the company led by the Reverend John Davenport and Theophilus Eaton who had been Ambassador to Denmark and Deputy-Governor of India. This company crossed the ocean on the *Hector* and a sister-ship. These ships, after a two months' voyage, dropped anchor in Boston harbor, seventeen years after the *Mayflower* had landed the Pilgrims at Plymouth Rock. The company, consisting of fifty

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<sup>2</sup> This I learned from the Reverend Clarence B. Scoville, of Amagansett, New York.

men and two hundred women and children, was the most prosperous that ever arrived in New England. But they found they had come into the midst of a quarrel. The disputatious and strong-minded Anne Hutchinson, a kind of militant, religious suffragette leader of her day, had thrown a theological apple of discord among the previously peaceful Puritans of the Massachusetts Bay Colony and set them all by the ears. The Governor, Sir Harry Vane, defended Anne, but her enemies described her as "an artful, enthusiastic and eloquent woman who, forgetting the modesty of her sex, had set herself up for a preacher! . . .".

The shrewd Boston Puritans, keenly alive to the advantages of having such opulent saints in their midst, made to the newcomers enticing inducements to settle permanently among them, but they, not wishing to buy into a quarrel, decided to seek other fields. So they sent out a reconnoitering party under the leadership of Theophilus Eaton which finally hit upon Quinnipiack on Long Island Sound, the site of the present city of New Haven, as the most desirable location for their settlement. Here they built a rude hut and left an unfortunate group of seven men to hold the post for the winter, and prepare for the arrival of the remainder of the company in the spring. John Beecher was one of the seven. He failed to survive the rigors of his first New England winter because he and his companions had such inadequate protection.

When Hannah Beecher with her son, Isaac, arrived with the rest of the colonists in the spring, she found her husband already buried in an unmarked grave. One hundred and twelve years later, in 1750, when David Beecher was a boy of twelve, workmen who were digging the cellar for a house at the corner of George and Meadow Streets in New Haven came upon human bones which were believed to have been those of John Beecher.<sup>8</sup> Since Hannah Beecher was the only

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<sup>8</sup>*The History of New Haven Colony*, by Edward Elias Atwater.



The House of David Beecher in New Haven, Connecticut, on the land allotted to the first Beecher settlers in 1638.  
Here Lyman Beecher was born in 1775.



Roxana (Ward) Foote, daughter of Andrew Ward (one of Washington's Generals) and grandmother of eight of the Lyman Beecher children

From a miniature painted on ivory by her daughter Roxana Foote, who married Lyman Beecher in Guilford, Connecticut,  
in 1799

midwife among them, she was given her husband's allotment of land upon which she and her son settled.

These colonists had not imperiled their lives by crossing the Atlantic Ocean in little cockleshells of ships to make the American wilderness safe for democracy, but to worship God as they thought right and to make every one else do the same. They had never heard of liberty, equality and fraternity, and had they heard of them they would have thought them shocking and subversive ideas. They had their social distinctions marked by dress, address and manners. Clergymen, college graduates, planters of good family and members of the General Court were gentlemen and were entitled to use the prefix Mr. before their names. Persons of reputable character who owned land, including laborers and tenant farmers of the better class, were called yeomen. A yeoman was addressed as goodman and his wife as goodwife or goody. John Beecher was not a gentleman, but a yeoman; his wife was not a lady, but a goodwife.<sup>4</sup>

By the time of David Beecher's birth theocracy was beginning to ferment with democracy. An American spirit of independence and rough-hewn individualism had grown up and was coming more and more into conflict with the English royal governors and, finally, with the laws enacted by Parliament. The colonists had become so independent both in spirit and in fact that they resented any dictation from the mother country. They began to demonstrate against these encroachments upon their liberty in the ways with which every schoolboy is familiar. Finally, they came to the point where they were ready to risk their lives for the preservation of the liberty and democracy which they had won, just as had their ancestors of a century earlier been ready to imperil theirs for God and theocracy. Hence the Revolution. So, although in middle life, David was jolted out of the peaceful tenor of

<sup>4</sup>For further account of founding of New Haven as well as of Hannah and Isaac Beecher see Appendix, pp. 397-399.

his ways and was forced into at least the casual fighting of the home guard militia of the older men.

This is recounted in the autobiography of his son, Lyman:

"I remember near the close of the war, when New Haven was attacked by the British, Aaron Burr happened to be there and took command of a party of militia. Father took his old firelock and went out with them. But the British were too strong for them and the word came for each one to look out for himself. Father was down in the 'second quarter,' so-called, and happened to see a scout; he raised his gun and stood deliberating whether he could kill a fellow being. The click of a trigger near by turned his head toward a British marksman who had no such scruples but was aiming straight at his head. He popped down into a ravine, losing his gun and his hat, and wandered about all that hot July day bareheaded and got a sunstroke from which he never wholly recovered.

"I remember that we were plowing when we heard the sound of cannon toward New Haven. 'Whoa!', said Uncle Benton; stopped team, off harness, mounted old Sorrel bareback, shouldered the old musket and rode off to New Haven. Deacon Bartlett went too, and Sam Bartlett said he never saw his father more keen after deer than he was to get a shot at the regulars. He had a large-bored, long, old shotgun that I bought afterward for ducks. . . ."

Thus casually did our ancestors fight the Revolution. While this is David Beecher's only recorded military exploit, it would seem that he must have done something more to become the captain of a company in the militia forces which were raised in 1779 to defend New Haven against the British attack led by Major-General Tryon. Even in those informal days a man would hardly have been promoted to a captaincy for losing his hat and getting a sunstroke.

The specialty of David Beecher as a blacksmith was the making of hoes. His son believed he made the best hoes in

New England. Judge Pickett, of Nova Scotia, agreed, and wanted two dozen of them, but found the duty would make them prohibitively expensive. So this good British Judge and the progenitor of preachers arranged that the latter should send the former a barrel of seed corn, but "with something else besides in it!"

During the summers David worked on his farm where his principal crop was rye. He prided himself on growing a particularly fine rye which was as white as wheat. Nowadays we look upon a blacksmith as an almost obsolete manual worker of slight importance even in his own day, but during the eighteenth century and most of the nineteenth the blacksmith shop was the fulcrum upon which the entire community leaned. The blacksmith shod the horses without which the inhabitants could not move themselves, nor their goods, from place to place. He made the implements with which the farmers cultivated the soil with which they kept the community alive; he made the tools with which the carpenters built the houses, the cabinet-makers made the furniture and the other mechanics made whatever else was made. Indeed, it is difficult to think of a more essential industry than was David Beecher's unless that practised by his original American ancestress, Hannah Beecher.

Spurred by his insatiable intellectual curiosity, the learned blacksmith became well posted in astronomy, geography and history, and so thoroughly had he studied the Protestant Reformation that he might have been termed almost an authority on that subject.

By the time Beecher was a middle-aged man, New Haven had grown to be a town of about two thousand inhabitants. Philadelphia was the metropolis of the New World with a population of thirty thousand and New York came next with twenty-five thousand. There was no hospital except a pest-house for smallpox cases, nor was there a poor-house. The poor of the town were farmed out; the man who bid the low-

"Why, my dear," she would comment, "I do wonder you can put eggs in your pockets after you have broken them so once."<sup>6</sup>

David Beecher had twelve children by his five wives, of whom four only survived infancy. Talk of infant mortality! But apparently it was not regarded as anything unusual or even worthy of comment; that Lyman, himself, survived even the first few hours of infancy was hardly more than an accident.

Lyman was the son of Esther Lyman, the third wife. Her mother was Hope Hawley who, in turn, was the daughter of Hope Stowe. So one of Lyman Beecher's great-grandmothers was a Stowe—a connection which his daughter, Harriet, was to resume.

Although David Beecher never reached the ultimate magnificence of his day, with mahogany chairs in the best parlor which was always hermetically sealed except for funerals, weddings and other epochal occasions, he did rise to the dignity of cherry chairs. In spite of living well, in an open-handed way, he laid by between four and five thousand dollars, a tidy fortune in those days for a man who was not a "gentleman" and who had earned it by the sweat of his brow. When he died in 1805, this money, together with his farm and his blacksmith shop, was his tangible legacies to his children. His intangible legacies, inexhaustibly recurring in his descendants, were a powerful physique, exceptional manual skill, avid intellectual curiosity, absent-mindedness, dyspepsia and a sense of humor.

<sup>6</sup> *Autobiography and Correspondence of Lyman Beecher.*

## CHAPTER II

### LYMAN BEECHER: 1775-1863

#### HUMAN THEOLOGIAN

THE Puritan Sunday of one hundred and fifty years ago began Saturday evening and closed Sunday evening as soon as three stars could be seen. One Sunday evening young Lyman Beecher, impatient for the tedious day to end, began to play before he could see the three stars. A neighbor boy, finding what he had done, shouted accusingly, "God'll put you in the fire and burn you forever and ever."

"That took hold," said Lyman. "I understood what fire was and what forever was. What emotion I had thinking—no end! no end! It has been a sort of mainspring ever since."<sup>1</sup> This was Lyman's first experience as a sinner.

Because his mother died when he was born, Lyman was brought up by his uncle and aunt, the Lot Bentons, on their farm in Guilford, Connecticut. This was the typical self-contained New England farm of the day, on which they raised their own food and the wool and flax from which they made their own clothes. It was this manner of life, said Lyman in after-life, which insured the Colonists' success in the Revolution. They could not be starved or frozen into subjection. They didn't fight to win their liberty. They were free and proposed to remain so.

Uncle Lot one day set Lyman to plowing a fifteen-acre lot in spots as steep as the roof of a house. He drove a pair of oxen hitched to a clumsy old iron plow which his Uncle had made himself and of which he was very proud. It was the day of wooden plows. Every once in a while the plow would

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<sup>1</sup>*The Autobiography and Correspondence of Lyman Beecher.*

leave the furrow and Lyman, day-dreaming, wouldn't notice until a warning shake from his uncle brought him back to earth. When uncle and nephew were crossing a field the next day, Lyman began, gee, haw, whoaing. Since he wasn't asleep his uncle gave up as hopeless his plan to make a farmer of him. He was to have inherited his childless uncle's farm.

From a most precarious start Lyman had become strong and athletic. Born in 1775, the son of David Beecher, he was a seven months' baby, so puny and unpromising that the mid-wife who attended his mother, Esther, had set him aside to die while she devoted herself to the tubercular mother who survived two days only. After doing what she could for her she looked to see if the baby was still breathing; and, finding he was, she washed and dressed him with the comment, "It's a pity he ain't goin' to die with his ma." A neighboring farmer remarked as he peered at him, "He ain't hardly woth raisin', be he?" By this close squeak did a man get a foothold on this earth who was to have thirteen children; and become, in the words of Theodore Parker, "the father of more brains than any other man in America."

Thanks to farm work which he hated and hunting and fishing which he loved, he had built up a rugged body. At least physically he was equipped for farming at the time of this—his climactic demonstration—of his ineptitude for it. After silently revolving in his mind his nephew's future, one day when they were picking apples together Uncle Lot asked Lyman if he would like to go to college. After sleeping on it Lyman thought he would, and they set off to consult his father, David, in New Haven. His father approved. It was agreed that the Bentons should clothe him—Aunt Benton could make most of his clothes—and his father would do the rest.

After two years of preparatory study with a parson uncle, he entered in 1793 the small primitive high school which Yale then was. This uncle used to make Lyman, and a girl cousin who was also studying under him, listen to his interminable

prosy sermons. This gave Lyman a dread of sanctified dullness which helped him to avoid it in his own preaching. President Stiles of Yale was a pompous little man devoted to the French skeptics. Taking their tone from him, most of the students were skeptics instead of Calvinists; and, in their manner of life, emulated Parisian *bon vivants* rather than the austere Puritans. A sophomore made Lyman his fag and used him as an errand boy until he revolted and threw bricks at midnight through his tormentor's window. Although obliged to pay for the broken windows, he didn't have to run any more errands. That was the day of the Tom Paine School of so-called infidelity. The students, who affected such beliefs, dubbed themselves Voltaire, Rousseau, etc. Many of them kept wine and liquors in their rooms. Drinking, profanity, gambling and licentiousness were common. In Lyman's sophomore year Dr. Timothy Dwight became president and began immediately to turn the tide toward Calvinistic belief and Puritan living. Lyman worshiped him from the first and Doctor Dwight became and remained a dominant influence in his life. "I loved him as my own soul," he said, "and he loved me as a son."

In Lyman's junior year, while spending a week-end with his father and stepmother, he underwent that peculiar mystical and psychological experience known as conversion. His mother saw a drunkard stumbling past the house who she said was once under conviction. She expressed the hope that the poor fellow might receive all his punishment in this life and escape hell-fire. After his stepmother left the room, Lyman had an impulse to pray. "I rose to pray and had not spoken five words before I was under as deep a conviction as ever I was in my life. The sinking of the shaft was instantaneous. I understood the law and my heart as well as I do now or shall in the Day of Judgment, I believe."

After a year or more of alternating faith and lack of it, and great agony of soul, he decided he could become a minis-

ter. In his senior year, his best intellectually, he studied rhetoric, logic, metaphysics, ethics, and, every Saturday, the catechism followed by a lecture on theology. His conversion and ministerial aspirations he did not find inconsistent with taking on the job of college butler which involved selling wines and liquors as well as foods to his fellow-students. Sagaciously he commissioned an English sporting parson to buy his wine supply. By this means he paid his debts, bought a new suit of clothes, laid by three hundred dollars, and the life-long opinion that he could have succeeded in business. The future founder of the American temperance movement became a retail liquor dealer.

Lyman found at this time not only his religion and his calling, but his future wife—Roxana Foote. A classmate took him to General Ward's farm at Nutplains, a part of Guilford, Connecticut, to call upon the General's granddaughters whom, owing to the early death of their father, he was bringing up. There lived also in General Ward's patriarchal abode, known as Castle Ward, his mother, an old lady who had known personally a number of the Pilgrim Fathers. The girls were spinning in an old mill-house, and Lyman fell in love at sight with Roxana, the handsomest and most gifted of the sisters. "I had sworn inwardly never to marry a weak woman," said he with the comfortable complacency of youth, "I had made up my mind that a woman to be my wife must have sense, must possess strength to lean upon. She was such as I had imagined. The whole circle in which she moved was one of uncommon intelligence, vivacity and wit. . . . They [Roxana and her sisters] read 'Sir Charles Grandison,' and Roxana had said she never meant to marry until she found Sir Charles' like. I presume she thought she had." The assumption that this gifted granddaughter of one of Washington's Generals thought she had found a Sir Charles Grandison in the callow son of the New Haven blacksmith is hard to swallow.

With a creditable record in everything except mathematics Lyman graduated from Yale in 1797. Of his class of thirty-one, sixteen became lawyers and fifteen ministers. This was significant although the point was undoubtedly lost on Lyman. Up to that time the clergy had been the dominant profession in the country—particularly in New England. They had not only ruled the people spiritually, but to a very large extent temporally. This was particularly true of the Congregational ministry whose faith was the state religion of Connecticut. The legal profession had been gradually rising in esteem and power from a despised status in Colonial days to one of comparable importance; and, while Lyman was still a young man, was to wrest from the clergy for all time its political dominance. Lyman had indeed seriously considered the law but became disgusted with what he regarded as the pettifogging and trickery of court-room practise.

After graduation he went for a year to the Yale Divinity School where he studied zestfully under his hero, Doctor Dwight—to the irreverent known as “old Pope Dwight.” “Dwight was a revival preacher and a new era of revivals was commencing,” commented Lyman. “There had been a general suspension of revivals after the Edwardian era during the Revolution, but a new day was dawning as I came on the stage, and I was baptized into the revival spirit.”

Lyman Beecher faced a world theological and rural, in sharp distinction from ours which is scientific and urban. To him and his contemporaries this life was not an end in itself but merely an ante-chamber to Heaven or Hell. His preceptor and model, Doctor Dwight, was a Calvinist of the so-called New Light or Edwardian School. Calvinists believed that all men since Adam’s fall were born innately wicked and depraved. To mitigate this desperate situation God sent His son Jesus to die on the cross for the sins of men. After that all persons who came to Christ through a mystical process known as conversion were elected to be saved and go to

Heaven. They were the Elect. It was the object of every Calvinist minister to make converts, thus adding to the number of the Elect to enjoy eternal bliss in Heaven and diminishing the always incomparably greater number of the damned to writhe forever in the torments of Hell.

To Doctor Dwight and his disciple, Lyman Beecher, these doctrines were not mere theories but vital beliefs. An orthodox church, as they conceived it, was a divine organization deriving its obligations and privileges direct from the Almighty just as the King, under the doctrine of the Divine Right of Kings, received his authority direct from God. The minister of such a church spoke with God's authority as God's agent. And this God was not the ethical abstraction of to-day, but a personal God—the all-powerful Ruler of the Universe. With such beliefs, "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" in this fleeting world were relatively of no importance compared with the reward of eternal bliss or the punishment of unending misery. Unless one bears in mind these, their fundamental beliefs, the thoughts and acts of Lyman Beecher and his contemporaries are, to the modern mind, unintelligible.

Just before leaving Yale Lyman became anxious about the state of Roxana's soul. As an Episcopalian she was suspect. He feared she was suffering from "natural goodness" because she had never been converted through supernatural intervention. "I went over to Nutplains," said he, "on purpose to converse with her, and, if the disagreement was too great, to relinquish the engagement. I explained my views and laid before her the great plan of redemption. As I went on, her bosom heaved, her tears flowed, her heart melted, and mine melted too; and I never told her to her dying day what I came for." He then wrote her four long letters dealing exclusively with his technical fears for her soul and prescribing books which might help her. So successful was he in throwing her into alternate states of elation and gloom like his own

that her family feared for her reason, but he failed to convince her that her love of God might be merely because of His blessings to her and hence selfish and sinful. He subjected Roxana finally to the supreme test of true Calvinism by asking her pointblank whether she was prepared to rejoice should God damn her for His own honor and glory. Roxana's reaction was as unexpected as it was unorthodox. She retorted that if to be damned meant anything it meant to be horribly wicked. The idea that for her to be horribly wicked would contribute to the honor and glory of her Heavenly Father was unthinkable! With a bewildered look Lyman exclaimed, "Oh, Roxana, what a fool I've been!" His orthodoxy had received its first blow, and he had taken the first step toward his trial for heresy. In revivals, thereafter, when ardent converts exclaimed they were prepared to be damned for the glory of God, he horrified them by shouting, "Be damned then if you want to be!"

After his year in the Yale Divinity School he was licensed to preach and went to Guilford to deliver his first sermon. The eager, cock-sure, unsophisticated young man looked down from the lofty pulpit upon Roxana, Uncle Lot, Aunt Benton and most of his boyhood neighbors and acquaintances including the man who as a boy had threatened him with hell-fire for not waiting for the three stars. "And where is now my hope?" was his text. He distinguished between true grounds for confidence in one's salvation and counterfeit assurances such as "spurious love of God." As this was what he had feared for Roxana the sermon was probably for her special benefit.

After a few weeks of waiting, during which he despairingly decided there were not enough churches to go around and he would never find one, he was invited to preach as a candidate by the Presbyterian Church at East Hampton, Long Island. He sailed there on a sloop from New London, Connecticut. "I had but little to carry," he commented. "I owned

a horse with saddle and bridle. All my clothes and personal effects I had packed in a little white hair trunk which I brought with me on the pommel of my saddle." During the voyage his horse fell overboard and was almost drowned.

The broad main street of East Hampton was grass-grown, with wheel ruts as the only indication it was a road. Flocks of cackling geese wandered up and down this primitive thoroughfare. The only trees were a single row of poplars between two of the principal houses, and a huge elm which was a landmark for miles around. There was a settlement of Montauk Indians on the outskirts of the town partly Christianized but mostly debased. Lyman's first reform activity was an effort to protect these Indians against exploitation by rum-sellers. On Gardiner's Island lived the seventh in descent from the original proprietor who was known as Lord Gardiner. Lord Gardiner and the young minister became close friends, and the large hospitable mansion, his second home. No sermon was complete for the press until Lord Gardiner had read and criticized it. On Sundays all the families from the villages of Amagansett, Three-Mile Harbor, The Springs and Fireplace, Wainscott, and a town of free Negroes called Freetown, came to meeting in great two-horse uncovered wagons with three seats carrying nine people. "It is probable that more than half the inhabitants of those retired villages made no other journey during their whole lives," said Lyman.

After a probationary period Lyman was selected as the minister of the church, but the call was not unanimous. The church, the only one in the town, had had three pastors only during its century and a half. The first had received forty-five pounds a year, his land free of taxes, his grain ground first at the mill Monday mornings, and one-quarter of the whales stranded on the beach. Lyman's pay was three hundred dollars a year, later raised to four, and his fire-wood. Although the minister no longer received a share of the

whales, the "weft," the signal that a whale had been sighted, was still in use, and several times Lyman went out with the boatmen in pursuit of whales.

Despite the church, infidelity had gained a foothold in the community. There was an infidel club which, although small, was composed of men of "talent, education and indefatigable zeal." They had ceremoniously burned a Bible. "It was the age of French infidelity," explained Lyman. "There was a leaven of scepticism all over the world." The church committee had charged the member who was to find a minister, "We want you to get a man that can stand his ground in argument and break the heads of these infidels." That was a call to battle after Lyman Beecher's own heart!

"I did not attack infidelity directly," said Lyman. "Not at all! That would have been cracking a whip behind a runaway team—made them run the faster. I always preached right to the conscience. Every sermon with my eye on the gun to hit somebody."

"If God enable me, shall speak plainly," he wrote Roxana. "Plainness, my friend, must be used. Everything is at stake. Immortal souls are sleeping on the brink of Hell. Time is on the wing. A few days will fix their eternal state. Shall I hide the truth, neglect the heart, labor to please the ear with smooth periods and be the siren song to lure them down to Hell? . . . Do I love God supremely? Am I willing to resign my dear Roxana? Is God my all in all?" That would seem an unfair question to have asked Roxana?

Fortunately he did not "resign his dear Roxana," but married her and brought her to stay with friends while their house was being prepared. A revival started right after they arrived. "Before evening service one Sabbath news came to me that two of Deacon Shirrell's sons were under conviction," exulted Lyman. "Oh, how I went down there! Whether walking or flying or on tiptoe I don't know. I spilled over. All the old folks waked up, and when I went home after

meeting to Aunt Phebe's the young people flowed together there . . . the good folks felt that they had a revival and now was their time . . . the work went on gloriously for six weeks and shook the whole town. Eighty were converted. . . ."

In a letter to her sister, Roxana described her husband's activities at this time. "Mr. Beecher has preached seven or eight times a week the whole winter. Last week, for example, he preached twice in town and two lectures, besides a funeral sermon on Gardiner's Island, and five sermons to the Indians and white people down at Montauk. He every week lectures at some one of the villages adjoining. . . . Some weeks at two or three of these places, and when not at these places, there have been meetings afternoons and evenings and sometimes in the forenoon." As if all of this were not enough, Lyman became in the fall of 1799 a trustee and the principal of Clinton Academy in East Hampton. This was the first academy to be opened in New York State. He continued as principal until the spring of 1803. This work is not mentioned in his autobiography, perhaps because teaching was then regarded as beneath the dignity of a clergyman. The accomplished Roxana added that she had spent almost all of her time in getting meals and clearing them away, spinning, knitting and mending her own and her husband's clothes.

After three years of such activities Lyman broke down nervously but neither his doctor nor he sensed any connection between these exhausting occupations and his condition. After weeks of complete prostration he was able to fish and hunt and eventually to go for a horseback ride of several weeks. It was a year before he could fully take up his work. One old man refused to pay his church taxes until he did. The orthodox churches were then supported by a general legal tax as are the public schools to-day. Lyman told of an old man who, on refusing to pay his church tax, had his heifer seized and sold by the sheriff.

There was no store in the town. All purchases were made in New York through a schooner which ran once a week.

" . . . there was not a carpet from end to end of the town," said Lyman. "All had sanded floors. . . . Your mother [Roxana] introduced the first carpet. Uncle Lot gave me some money and I had an itch to spend it. Went to a vendue and bought a bale of cotton. She spun it and had it woven, then laid it down, sized it and painted it in oils with a border all round it and bunches of roses and other flowers over the centre. She sent to New York for her colors and ground and mixed them herself. The carpet was nailed down on the garret floor and she used to go up there and paint.

"After the carpet was completed and laid on the parlor floor old Deacon Tallmadge came to see me. He stopped at the parlor door and seemed afraid to come in.

"Walk in, Deacon, walk in," said I.

"Why I can't," said he, "thout steppin' on't." Then, after surveying it awhile in admiration, "D'ye think ye can have all that an' Heaven too?" <sup>22</sup>

Four children made their appearance as rapidly as Nature permitted: Catharine, William, Edward and Mary. The salary, although by now four hundred dollars a year, was inadequate to the mounting expenses, so Roxana had to open a school, with five young girls as boarders besides day pupils. Her sister, Mary, helped her and her husband in English composition. Lavoisier's newly published *Chemistry* was one of their text-books. Chemistry was a new subject and a constant topic of conversation—chemistry and embroidery appear to have been the two subjects most stressed. Lyman hated teaching as much as he had farming. Although doing the house-work, including making the cloth and clothes for a family of six, with the assistance of two Negro children (bound girls) and conducting this school, Roxana found time for her hob-

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<sup>2</sup>The Autobiography and Correspondence of Lyman Beecher.

bies—gardening, “drawing likenesses on ivory,” and painting in water colors.

When Aaron Burr shot Alexander Hamilton in a duel, Lyman Beecher, in a blaze of indignation, decided that dueling must be stopped. He found Burr had forced the duel upon Hamilton after himself practising pistol shooting for three months. After studying the subject six months Lyman wrote a sermon which he preached first in his own church, and then before the Synod, to the amazement of that conservative body. In that day clergymen, in the pulpit at any rate, were supposed to devote themselves to theology.

“Dueling is a great national sin,” thundered young Lyman Beecher. “With the exception of a small section of the Union, the whole land is defiled with blood. From the lakes of the north to the plains of Georgia is heard the voice of lamentation and woe—the cries of widows and the fatherless. This work of desolation is performed often by men in office, by the appointed guardians of life and liberty. On the floor of Congress challenges have been threatened if not given, and thus powder and ball have been introduced as the auxiliaries of deliberation and argument. . . . A duellist may be a gambler, a prodigal, a fornicator, an adulterer, a drunkard and a murderer and not violate the laws of honor.”

When he had finished he introduced a resolution, to which he anticipated no opposition, providing for the formation of societies to stop dueling. But the members of the Synod had begun to hear from prominent parishioners “politically affiliated with men of dueling principles.” Hence there was powerful opposition led by an eminent elderly D. D. Lyman Beecher was an obscure young man of thirty. “When my turn came I rose and knocked away their arguments and made them ludicrous,” he exclaimed. “Never made an argument

so short, strong, and pointed in my life. . . . Oh, I declare! If I didn't switch 'em an' scorch 'em an' stamp on 'em. It swept all before it. . . . It was the center of old fogeyism, but I mowed it down and carried the vote of the house." He added that some of the elderly D. D.'s peered at him over their spectacles as if he were a curiosity. "An impression was made that never ceased," Lyman concluded. "It started a series of efforts that affected the whole Northern mind at least; and in Jackson's time the matter came up in Congress, and a law was passed disfranchising a duellist."

The sermon was published with a "Recommendation," by way of introduction, signed by Dr. J. M. Mason, the outstanding preacher of New York City at the time, six other prominent clergymen and one layman, and over forty thousand copies were distributed. That achievement made Lyman Beecher, if not a national figure, at least something more than a country minister.

By 1809 he had found it impossible to support his family on four hundred dollars a year, even supplemented by Roxana's school, and served notice on his church that unless they would pay his debts amounting to five hundred dollars and raise his salary to five hundred dollars he must leave. For a few Sundays he preached in the Brick Church in New York, and while there Roxana wrote him her views on the salary question. "The very low estimate which people appear to have of the blessing of the Gospel ministry is strikingly exemplified when we compare what they are willing to pay for it with what they are willing to pay for their gratification in a hundred other respects, and a people who are provided with all the comforts of life, and who, as a people, pay so much annually for mere luxuries (tobacco for instance) ought to be able to support a minister so that he shall not need to be harassed with worldly cares."

It is little wonder that this situation puzzled Roxana Beecher when one realizes that in her day Heaven and Hell

were vital realities, and it was thought to be impossible to win the one or escape the other without the aid of one's minister. The fact that a clergyman can not haggle over his pay without losing caste was presumably responsible for the low pay of ministers then as now.

At this crucial moment, Judge Reeve of the famous Litchfield Law School, the first law school to be opened in this country, sent a message to Lyman Beecher inquiring whether he would consider a call to the Litchfield Congregational Church. He assented and went there to preach as a candidate. After the first Sunday he wrote Roxana, "In the morning I preached against morality from 'Other foundation can no man lay,' and my host, who is a moral man, says it must be true." He had demonstrated to his own satisfaction, and that of his host, that no amount of goodness can save a man who is not sound in doctrine and converted in the approved way.

The Litchfield church unanimously chose him as their minister and he went back to East Hampton to preach to his people a farewell sermon on "the universal and entire depravity of human nature." The Litchfield church offered him eight hundred dollars a year, with fire-wood, which in this case was to be furnished through the minister's "woodspell," when all the parishioners were invited once a year to visit the parsonage with a load of wood for the minister, and to receive not only his thanks but hot flip and doughnuts. Fire-wood was an important item in those days when houses were heated only by fireplaces and wood-burning stoves. The semi-mendicant condition of the clergy then, and to some extent even now, seems a curious survival of the sanctified poverty of the mendicant monks of the Middle Ages. The clergy were always poor and constantly receiving alms both in money and in kind.

Litchfield, situated high among the Berkshire Hills, with its broad streets shaded by splendid elms and its many spacious and beautiful colonial houses, was no ordinary New England

town. Lyman Beecher's daughter, Harriet Beecher Stowe, many years later said of her childhood memory of it:

"My earliest recollections of Litchfield are those of its beautiful scenery which impressed and formed my mind long before I had words to give names to my emotions or could analyse my mental processes. I remember standing often in the door of our house and looking over a distant horizon where Mount Tom reared its round blue head against the sky, and the Great and Little Ponds, as they were called, gleamed out amid a steel-blue sea of distant pine groves. To the west of us rose a smooth-bosomed hill called Prospect Hill; and many a pensive, wondering hour have I sat at our play-room window, watching the glory of the wonderful sunsets that used to burn themselves out, amid voluminous wreathings or castellated turrets of clouds—vaporous pageantry proper to a mountainous region.

"Litchfield sunsets were famous, perhaps because watched by more appreciative and intelligent eyes than the sunsets of other mountain towns around."

When Mrs. Stowe was in Paris, half a century later, an old French Count, who had been one of Judge Reeve's students, never tired of saying that "the society of Litchfield was the most charming in the world."

A letter which Roxana wrote her sister-in-law, a year or more after the family moved to Litchfield, showed that she at least had scant time to enjoy this "charming society."

"Would now write you a long letter were it not for several vexing circumstances such as the weather extremely cold, storm violent and no wood cut; Mr. Beecher gone, and Sabbath day with company—a clergyman, a stranger, Catharine sick, George [the third son] almost so, Rachel's finger cut off and she crying and groaning with the pain [one of the Negro bound girls]. . . . As for reading I average perhaps one page a week. . . . I expect to be obliged to be contented (if I can) with the

stock of knowledge I already possess except what I glean from the conversation of others. . . . Mary has, I suppose, told you of the discovery that the fixed alkalies are metallic oxyds. . . . I think this is all the knowledge I have obtained in the circle of the arts and sciences of late; if you have been more fortunate pray let me reap the benefit."

The Reverend Lyman Beecher, who had recently become a D. D., on his way to church on a Sunday morning crossed a trout stream. Seeing a big trout jump, and remembering he had left a pole and tackle under the bridge, he sprang down the bank, grabbed his pole and landed the trout. Slipping it into the tail pocket of his ministerial coat he ran on to the church and breathlessly mounted to his high pulpit, his clerical necktie all awry and his handsome ruddy face flushed with exertion, just as the bell stopped tolling. The next Sunday morning when poor Roxana opened the closet door to brush the ministerial coat, she smelt that fish before she found it.

Mrs. Stowe has described the church mice in her father's venerable meeting-house.

"In front of the pulpit was a bench on which at noon, between the two long sermons, some members of the congregation who came from afar sat and ate their dinners. Consequently there would be by time of the afternoon service sundry crumbs of cheese and bread on the floor. In the base of the pulpit just above the floor dwelt a number of pious church mice, and in the afternoons, when Father was thundering away in the lofty pulpit, I would see their little bright eyes shining cautiously out of their holes. If Father became quiet they would venture out and begin a meal on the crumbs; but suddenly some awful words, like reprobation or foreordination, would come roaring down from above, the mice would run for their lives and not venture out again until they thought the danger past."

A year or so after coming to Litchfield, Lyman Beecher went to two ordinations in succession where the reverend members drank heavily. The ministerial society actually furnished the drinks—they were “on the house.” “The sideboard with the spillings of water and sugar and liquor looked and smelled like the bar of a very active grog-shop,” commented Beecher. While none of the ministers were really drunk, many were considerably exhilarated. He resolved never to attend another such affair.

The next year, when Lyman was thirty-six, at a meeting of the General Association of Connecticut (an organization of the Congregational ministers of the state) a committee, appointed a year before, to look into intemperance, reported that while it was increasing in an alarming manner, “they were obliged to confess they did not perceive that anything could be done.”

“The blood started through my heart when I heard this,” exclaimed Beecher. “I rose instanter and moved that a committee of three be appointed to report at that meeting the ways and means of arresting the tide of intemperance. The committee was named and appointed. I was chairman, and on the following day, brought in a report, the most important paper I ever wrote.”

This report gave a long list of concrete recommendations, among them that parents should cease to serve “ardent spirits” on their tables; that church members cease to regard them as essential to hospitality; and that employers stop serving them to their employees. This report was adopted and put into effect. The next year marked improvement was reported. The Massachusetts association took similar action. The movement spread throughout New England and eventually the entire country. The American temperance movement was launched.

Some years later Lyman Beecher went to preach in a hamlet near Litchfield in connection with his incessant revival activities. As was his custom, he went to the house of a promising young man who had actively helped him. He found the young wife in tears of despair and the husband in bed—drunk. This aroused him against drunkenness just as had the Burr-Hamilton fight against dueling. Hurrying home, in a white heat of indignation, he wrote six sermons against drinking which he preached on successive Sundays. They were later published, translated into many languages, and widely circulated in this country and many others. In the concluding sermon, he asked what is the remedy for intemperance and answered, "It is the banishment of ardent spirits from the list of lawful articles of commerce by a correct and efficient public sentiment such as has turned slavery out of half of our land and will yet expel it from the world."

Lyman Beecher said of the political rule of the clergy before they were overthrown by the lawyers: "On election they had a festival. All the clergy used to walk in procession, smoke pipes and drink. And, fact is, when they got together they would talk over who should be governor and who lieutenant-governor and who in the upper house and their counsels would prevail." Every clergyman was a politician. The lawyers opposed the succession of a certain lieutenant-governor because he stood for the strict enforcement of the Sunday laws—the blue laws. They defeated him and put in their own man with the defiant exclamation, "We have served the clergy long enough!" The lawyers organized against Congregationalism, the established religion, "nearly all the minor sects, besides the Sabbath-breakers, rum-selling tippling folk, infidels and ruff-scuff generally." "They slung us out like a stone from a sling!" exclaimed Beecher.

"For several days I suffered what no tongue can tell," said he, "for the best thing that ever happened to the

State of Connecticut. It cut the churches loose from dependence on state support. It threw them wholly on their own resources and on God.

"They say ministers have lost their influence; the fact is they have gained. By voluntary efforts, societies, missions and revivals they exert a deeper influence than ever they could by queues and shoe-buckles and cocked hats and gold-headed canes."

What with the periodic arrival of babies and the high prices following the War of 1812, in spite of the one-hundred-percent. increase in salary, the specter of poverty was haunting the Beechers again. Roxana had a little money in an uncle's business in New York on the strength of which she built an addition to the house so they might take ~~as~~ boarders some of the young women of Miss Pierce's School, in a desperate effort to make ends meet. This effort proved desperate indeed! Her uncle's business failed. She lost everything. The addition cost twice as much as estimated. They would have been bankrupt had not the church come to their rescue.

Borne down by over-work and worry Roxana died of consumption in 1816. This was the supreme sorrow of Lyman Beecher's life. Mrs. Stowe commented on the relation between them, "The communion between her and my father was a peculiar one. It was an intimacy throughout the whole range of their being. There was no human mind in whose decisions he had greater confidence. Both intellectually and morally he regarded her as the better and stronger portion of himself and I remember hearing him say that, after her death, his first sensation was a sort of terror like that of a child suddenly shut out alone in the dark." Many years later, he said to his son, Henry Ward, pointing to a great pile of manuscript, "There are the sermons I wrote the year after your mother died, and not one of them is good for anything!"

Lyman Beecher was left not only with his grief but with debts and eight children ranging in age from sixteen-year-old

Catharine to the baby Charles, of nine months. Between these extremes came William, Edward, Mary, George, Harriet and Henry Ward. Lyman's sister Esther and his mother, devotees of quietude and immaculateness, made the heroic sacrifice of moving from their little peaceful cottage into the big noisy house. "Aunt Esther," with Catharine as aide-de-camp, took command of the household. A few days after the funeral, Catharine found little Henry Ward, his curls palpitating with his efforts, digging under her window. When she asked him what he was doing he looked up and replied, "I's diggin' down to find Mother."

Having declared war on infidelity, dueling and drinking, Lyman Beecher next attacked Unitarianism, at the citadel of its power in Boston. In 1817 he delivered the installation sermon for a fellow-minister at the Park Street Church. This was his first notable blow at Unitarianism. He called the sermon "The Bible, a Code of Laws." It was later published and widely read. "From the time Unitarianism began to show itself in this country, it was a fire in my bones," he said of this attack. "My mind had been heating, heating, heating. Now I had a chance to strike . . . there had been no such attack on Unitarianism, explaining our doctrines so that they could stand. The sensation all over the city was great. It was a perfect victory."

"You are right in thinking the Unitarians are gaining," he wrote a fellow-minister. "Their power of corrupting the youth of the commonwealth by means of Cambridge [Harvard] is silently putting sentinels in all the churches, legislators in the halls and judges on the bench and scattering everywhere physicians, lawyers and merchants." What would Lyman Beecher have thought had he known that a few years after his death, one of his grandsons was to enter this stronghold of pernicious heresies, to be followed by several great-grandsons?



Lyman Beecher House, East Hampton, Long Island (1799-1810),  
where five children of Roxana Foote were born



Lyman Beecher House, Litchfield, Connecticut (1810-1826), where three more



William Henry Beecher, 1802–1889

The crime of the Unitarians in Lyman Beecher's eyes was of course their denial that Christ was the Deity, and that only by His death on the cross was the salvation of mankind made possible. By false hopes they were luring people away from Heaven and down to Hell.

He met at this time, and shortly married, Harriet Porter, of Portland, Maine. She was a daughter of Dr. Aaron Porter, one of the most successful physicians of the time. One of her uncles, William King, had been the first governor of Maine, another a congressman noted for his oratory, and a third a member of the Continental Congress, of the Constitutional Convention, of the United States Senate, and twice minister to Great Britain. She herself was noted for beauty, wit and cultivation. This plebeian son of the New Haven blacksmith had a way with him which won the hearts of patrician women.

The arrival of the new mother was described by Mrs. Stowe:

"I was about six years old and slept in the nursery with my two younger brothers. We knew Father was gone away somewhere on a journey, and was expected home, and thus the sound of a bustle or disturbance in the house more easily awoke us. We heard Father's voice in the entry, and started up, crying out as he entered our room, 'Why here's pa!' A cheerful voice called out from behind him, 'And here's ma!'

"A beautiful lady, very fair, with bright blue eyes and soft auburn hair bound round with a black velvet bandeau, came into the room, smiling, eager and happy-looking, and coming up to our beds, kissed us and told us she loved little children and would be our mother. We wanted forthwith to get up and be dressed, but she pacified us with the promise that we should find her in the morning."

Lyman Beecher attempted to read to his bride Jonathan Edwards' sermon, "Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God"—the sermon that used to make women faint and be carried out of church. Before he read far his beautiful bride got up

with flushed cheeks exclaiming, "Dr. Beecher, I shall not listen to another word of that slander on my Heavenly Father!" and swept out of the room. This gave Lyman Beecher's orthodoxy its second blow and he took the second step toward his heresy trial.

A series of revivals now swept the state into which he plunged headlong until he broke down again. He had to give up work and tried hunting, fishing and trips to Niagara Falls and Maine, all in vain. Thinking he had consumption he consulted a Doctor Jackson in Boston whose diagnosis was, "acute dyspepsia as a result of overwork and false methods." "Before, it was an unknown disease," commented Beecher. Encouraged by his doctor he took to farm work as a cure. "I bought eight acres of land east of the house, hired a man, bought a yoke of oxen, plow, horse-cart and went to work every day. . . . I didn't study a sermon that summer. There is some advantage in being an extempore speaker. Squire Langdon used to say that when he saw me out digging potatoes Saturday evening he expected a good sermon Sunday morning. Slowly but surely I got up."

This breakdown led him to develop what he called his "clinical theology" which, as he said, enabled him to distinguish in his penitents, between "dyspepsia and piety." He amazed earnest inquirers at revival meetings by asking them, instead of the expected questions about their souls, how much exercise they took and whether their bowels moved regularly!

His remarks had now come to be widely quoted. When asked why he didn't reply to an opponent who was savagely attacking him, in one of his many public controversies, he rapped out, "Once I threw a book at a skunk and he had the best of it. I made up my mind never to try it again!"

When he was being violently attacked in the religious press and some friend offered sympathy, he brushed it aside with the comment, "Oh, I don't mind because when I see the feathers fly, I know I've hit my bird!" After an exasperating

altercation with some dullards he exclaimed, "Wish the Creator had made fewer people an' given 'em more brains." When after a service a parishioner remarked that he had never heard him speak so loud, he commented: "Oh, yes, the less I have to say the louder I holler." Of a specially responsive listener in his congregation he remarked, "He makes me think of a partridge on a dead limb, watching me when I'm trying to get a shot at him."

By 1825 it was painfully evident that he could no longer support his wife and family—now ten children—on his salary of eight hundred dollars a year which had not been raised since he came in 1810. He could not pay his debts, prevent the accumulation of fresh ones, or continue the education of his children. He requested dismissal from his church, and reviewed before his congregation the story of his losing struggle to make ends meet. "My late investigation of my concerns had convinced me," he concluded, "that there is an annual deficiency in my salary of two hundred dollars wholly irremediable by any possible efforts of my own or by any authorized reliance upon Providence."

So this now fifty-year-old eminent member of the profession on which, as was then thought, the eternal happiness of men depended, who had labored tirelessly for his parishioners for fifteen years, for lack of two hundred dollars was allowed to go, just as he had previously been allowed to leave East Hampton for lack of one hundred dollars!

In spite of poverty, dyspepsia, duelists, drunkards, dullards, infidels and Unitarians Lyman Beecher's spirits were usually buoyant. He trained his boys in fishing and hunting and woodcraft as zealously as in theology. He romped with his children. He came home after evening meetings and played his fiddle "to let down," as he called it. If his wife wasn't there to prevent, he would take off his shoes and dance a horn-pipe to the delight of the children. His wife's objection was not ecclesiastical, but purely domestic—it wore out his socks.

At the psychological moment of this second crisis in his career, just as before, a call came to a larger opportunity. Twenty-four hours after he had decided he must leave Litchfield, he received a letter from the Hanover Street Church of Boston, asking if he would come to them. He accepted and set off full of zest to beard the wicked Unitarians in their den.

## CHAPTER III

### LYMAN BEECHER

#### NEAR HERETIC

WHEN starting his work in Boston, Lyman Beecher was attacked by acute dyspepsia and depression. Throwing himself on the floor before the fire, he cried out to his son, William, "It's all over with me! I only want to get my mind composed in God—but it is hard to see such a door of usefulness set open and not be able to enter." . . . "I am happy to say we are beginning to be really comfortable," wrote Mrs. Beecher a little later. ". . . I know not how a minister can desire anything better than to preach the Gospel in Boston. . . . The four younger children are with us. [Charles, Henry, Isabella and Thomas—the last two her own.] The girls are at Hartford, established as a family with Aunt Esther at their head. . . . [Catharine, Mary and Harriet.] Edward and George are at New Haven, William at Andover. . . ."

Despite dyspepsia Lyman Beecher succeeded in stirring up a revival in Boston, and as the revival grew, his spirits rose until he jubilantly wrote Edward, "Every circumstance in my present condition is agreeable, prosperous and cheering."<sup>1</sup>

Lyman Beecher's whole purpose in life was the promotion of religious revivals to advance the coming of "the millennial reign of our Lord Jesus Christ." He attacked anybody or anything who, or which, hindered or obstructed such revivals. His life was one of complete singleness of purpose. He believed literally that Christ was to return to this earth and rule over it in the near future, and that he was one of those whom the Almighty had commissioned to prepare for His second

<sup>1</sup> *The Autobiography and Correspondence of Lyman Beecher.*

coming. He attacked unbelievers, duelists, drinkers, Unitarians; and, later, Roman Catholics, because they were obstructing revivals and deferring the millennium.

The revival brought seventy converts into Beecher's church at the first communion service. This tangible indication of his success produced an amazing, and to us, incredible effect.

"Till then all had been the butt of ridicule," said Beecher. "The enemy had kept whist, except a few outlaws at first, although the higher classes—the Cambridge College folks—had their spies abroad to see what was going on. . . . After the seventy joined, the press belched and bellowed and all the mud in the streets was flying at us. . . . There was an intense malignant enragement for a time. Showers of lies were rained about us every day. The Unitarians, with all their principles of toleration, were really as persecuting a power while they had the ascendancy as ever existed. Wives and daughters were forbidden to attend our meetings; and the whole weight of political, literary, and social influence was turned against us, and the lash of ridicule laid on without stint. . . . I used to think as I walked the streets, 'If you could know anything that was vile about me you would scream for joy, but you don't.' All sorts of vile letters were written to me by abandoned people. But all this malignity did us no harm. They only rung the bell for me."

And Lyman Beecher now added to the hostile uproar by repreaching his six sermons on intemperance. "There was a great ebullition of rage among a certain class. And from that commenced a series of efforts among my people and others in Boston to promote this reform," he commented.

In his zeal in defending Calvinism against the misrepresentations of its enemies, Lyman Beecher had alarmed some of its friends. The Unitarians were beginning to say that Calvinism, as expounded by Beecher, was not Calvinism at all,

and some dyed-in-the-wool Calvinists were beginning to agree with them. Calvinism, to quote Lyman Beecher's grandson, Charles Edward Stowe, "was a mighty giant on the pathway of history who walked on two legs; the agency of God and the agency of man. He was always going lame in one leg or the other, and flopping over into fatalism on the one side or Arminianism on the other." (The Arminians believed men could be saved by their own efforts without supernatural intervention.) Lyman Beecher held that the doctrine of inability—that no man since Adam's fall ever had been, or would be, able to obey the law of God—had led to hopeless fatalism. "Since I can't obey the law of God, why should I try? If God chooses to save me, I'll be saved—if He doesn't, I'll be lost. In either case there is nothing I can do about it," said men of such belief. He characterized this state of mind as "the bottom falling out of accountability," and regarded as his theological mission in life "to put it back."

In this effort Lyman Beecher contributed to the theology of the time the doctrine of immediate repentance. He held not only that men could repent of their sins of their own free will, but that it was their most imperative duty to do so at once. This doctrine was the focal point of his enemies' attack in his heresy trial. If man can repent of his own free will, how can God be almighty, said they?

In this stand he was both following and supplementing the New Light Calvinism of his great predecessor, Jonathan Edwards. The ungodly laughed at the controversy over the doctrine of inability and burlesqued it in the jingle:

"You will and you won't,  
You can and you can't,  
You'll be damned if you don't."

Jonathan Edwards had failed to explain how freedom of the will could co-exist with God's absolute control over, and fore-

knowledge of, every thought and deed of every human being. The Old-School men said one could not believe both doctrines since they were mutually contradictory. Lyman Beecher and his friend and ally, Doctor Taylor, the head of the Yale Divinity School, and other New-School leaders claimed they believed in both doctrines and did not find them contradictory. To us the whole controversy seems so like tweedledum and tweedledee that it is impossible to take it seriously. But to them it was not only a matter of life and death, but one of eternal life and eternal death.

While still in Litchfield Beecher arranged to exchange pulpits on a certain Sunday with a minister in a neighboring town—an Old-School Calvinist. They met half-way between their respective towns and when they stopped to greet each other the Old-School man exclaimed, "Doctor Beecher, I wish to call to your attention that before the creation of the world God arranged that you were to preach in my pulpit and I in yours on this particular Sabbath." "Is that so? Then I won't do it!" retorted Beecher. And he wheeled his chaise about and drove back to his own church, leaving his fellow-minister staring blankly after him.

Lyman Beecher found the Unitarians were excluding the orthodox from political influence by controlling the primaries. He called together the leading young men of his church, pointed out this situation, and suggested that they take a hand in the primaries themselves. So the orthodox won equal political influence with the Unitarians. These young men organized the Hanover Street Church Young Men's Association, which led to the formation of other such organizations in other evangelical churches, and finally to a city-wide convention of such associations. They appointed committees on various city matters. They secured the passage of laws prohibiting lotteries on Boston Common and booths for the sale of strong drinks. They defeated a project to raise funds through a lottery for the completion of Bunker Hill Monu-

ment. They had a committee to welcome young men newly arrived in the city—to put them in touch with the right people. The wicked steamboat excursions to Nahant, in violation of the Sunday laws, they had stopped. They started popular lectures or lyceums for both sexes. Previously what few lectures there were were for men only. Women were not supposed to be interested in such matters. So Lyman Beecher was indirectly responsible for the lyceums of America in which his son, Henry Ward, a generation later, became such a luminary.

He founded a paper called *The Spirit of the Pilgrims*, so that he might assail the Unitarians and all their ways by pen as well as by tongue. He delivered a series of lectures on Roman Catholicism in which he sounded an alarm as to the supposed designs of the Vatican upon our country. So Roman Catholics were added to his lengthening list of avowed enemies. Such enemies now included infidels, duelists, drinkers, Unitarians and Roman Catholics. All alike were obstructing revivals of religion and deferring the millennium.

To combat his dyspepsia Beecher depended upon exercise. As he naturally couldn't have a farm in Boston, he had to devise other means. He and his son, Edward, who had become the minister of the Park Street Church, put up parallel bars and other gymnastic apparatus in his back yard. Visiting clergymen would find the Reverend Doctor Beecher engaged in chinning himself or, to them, some equally inexplicable and inexcusable activity. He had a load of sand dumped into his cellar, which, when the weather was too bad for out-of-door exercise, he and Edward shoveled from one side of the cellar to the other. He not only sawed his own fire-wood, but requested his neighbors to allow him to saw theirs. The sharpness of his saw and his skill in its use gave him as much satisfaction as his theological triumphs.

Sunday mornings in the Beecher household were always hectic. When the church-bell began to ring anxious reminders that it was time to start would be sent to Doctor Beecher's

study on the top floor. After a series of increasingly urgent messages he would burst from the room and bound down the stairs several steps at a time to the front hall while arranging fluttering notes. Hooking his wife on one arm and a daughter on the other he would precipitantly leave the house and start down the street at a most un-Sabbath-like pace. Arriving at the church, just as the bell was tolling its last, he would abruptly deposit his breathless wife and daughter and make for the pulpit with long swinging strides. This sudden eleventh-hour entrance of the chief actor made a pleasant ripple of excitement in the decorous gathering. When he got into the full swing of preaching he would, with a nervous gesture, sweep his spectacles up onto the top of his head. A little later, needing glasses to read a note, he would fumble in his pocket and produce another pair which would in turn be switched up onto his head until, before he had done preaching, his head would be covered as with a helmet with discarded spectacles. Never did he rid himself of such rustic pronunciations as "creatur" and "natur."

In 1830 the Hanover Street Church burned. The firemen sat idly by, refusing to work the engines, and singing,

"While Beecher's church holds out to burn,  
The vilest sinner may return."

One of the basement rooms had been hired by a merchant, who, unknown to anybody, had stored it with liquor. The sudden flaming-up of this liquor caused much merriment among the firemen who cheered, "Beecher's broken jug!"

His future son-in-law, Calvin Stowe, said that while a group of his friends were lugubriously discussing in a near-by book-store the tragedy of the burning of the church, Lyman Beecher came skipping in and remarked apropos of the stone steeple having been split by the heat, "Well, my jug's broke, just been to see it!"

"The moral destiny of our nation and all our institutions and hopes and the world's hopes turns on the character of the West," he wrote his daughter Catharine a little later, "and the competition now is for that of pre-occupancy in the education of the rising generation in which Catholics and infidels have got the start of us.

"I have thought seriously of going over to Cincinnati, the London of the West, to spend the remnant of my days in that great conflict, and of consecrating all my children to God in that region who are willing to go. If we gain the west, all is safe; if we lose it, all is lost."

He dealt in vast projects, the supreme importance of which he never questioned, no matter how petty their materialization. That he believed himself personally deputed by the Creator to carry out these plans inevitably gave him implicit confidence in their importance.

A solicitor called one day to interest him in a stage line which was to keep the Sabbath by not operating on that day. In a fervor of approval he rushed up-stairs to get some money to invest in the enterprise. He came across seventy-five dollars which the women of his church had given his wife for a much-needed parlor carpet. He gave it to the solicitor and the parlor went without a carpet. His right so to use this money may well have been questioned, and doubtless was by the good women who gave it, but Lyman Beecher was too much absorbed in advancing the Kingdom of Heaven to bother with petty questions of right and wrong.

One day he walked into the house of a neighbor and sat down in front of the fire lost in thought. Finally he looked up, saw a French clock on the mantelpiece, and exclaimed, "Wife, where did you get that clock?" As he repeated the inquiry Mrs. Rhoades, whose house it was and who happened to be one of "the enemy"—that is, a Unitarian, came forward evidently much amused and said, "Doctor Beecher, I fear you have made a mistake." Looking about into the smiling faces

of his Unitarian neighbors, with blurted apologies, he beat a precipitant retreat.<sup>2</sup>

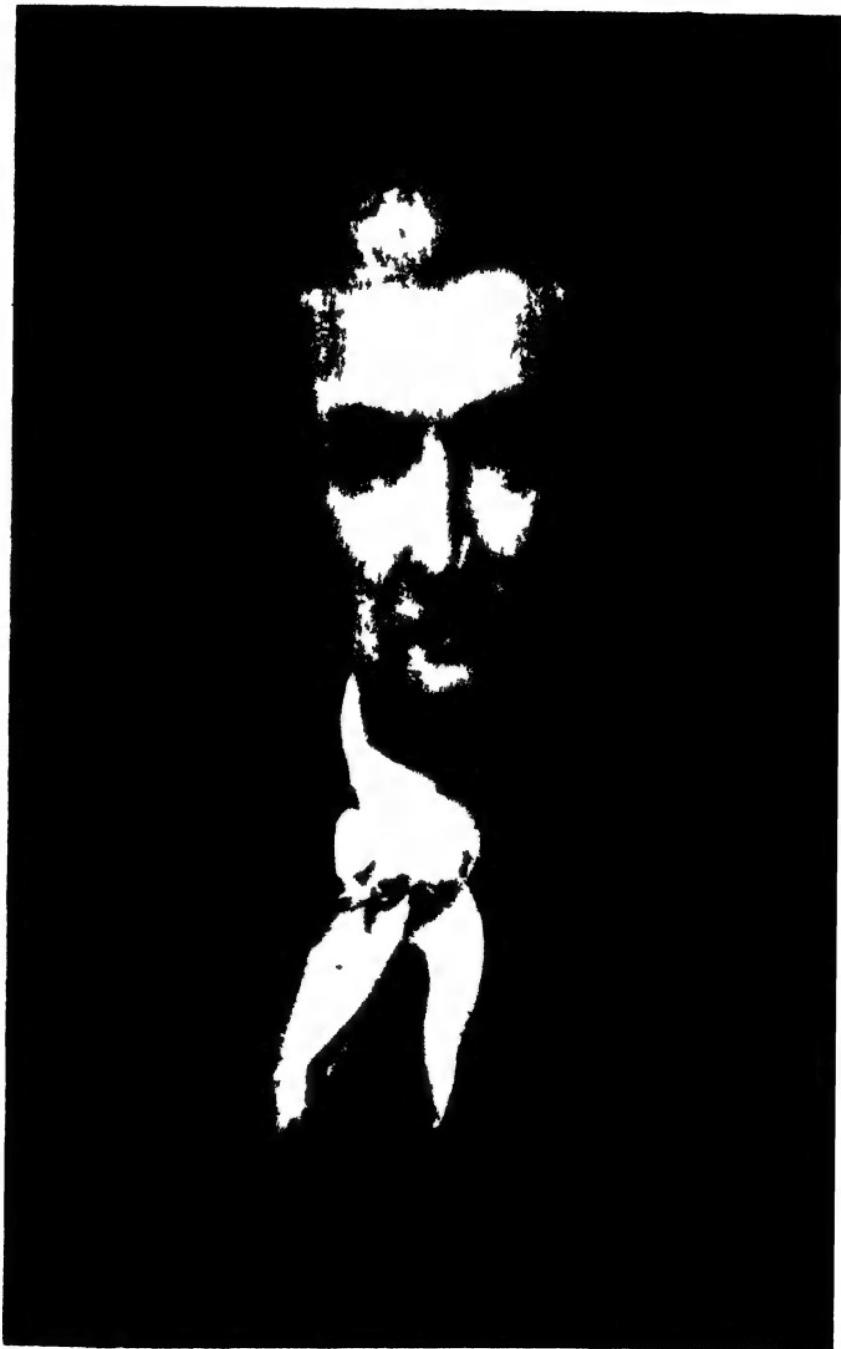
The agent of Lane Theological Seminary in Cincinnati, who had been sent East to raise funds and find a President, reported to his trustees on his return:

"After much consultation it appeared to be the common impression of those consulted that Doctor Beecher of Boston, if he could be obtained, would be the best man. That, as he is the most prominent, popular and powerful preacher in our nation, he would immediately give character elevation and success to our seminary, draw together young men from every part of our country, secure the confidence and cooperation of the ministers and churches both east and west of the Alleghany Mountains, and awaken a general interest in the old states in behalf of the West."

This offer so exactly fitted into Lyman Beecher's own ideas that he was eager to accept, but his people, who were heavily involved financially in building their new church, reminded him that he had promised to stand by until it was finished. Accordingly he regretfully declined.

A year later the offer was renewed with the added pressure that Arthur Tappan, a New York philanthropist, had offered the seminary a large sum contingent upon their securing Lyman Beecher as president. He finally accepted provided he might count upon complete support in teaching what he believed. He also asked that he be enabled to continue his pastoral duties, pointing out that he had never known a preacher to give up such duties without retrograding in his preaching. "I should exceedingly deprecate the annual drilling of a class one year in Biblical literature, the next in theology and lastly in composition and eloquence—one stratum of knowledge piled

<sup>2</sup>"When Lyman Beecher Attacked Boston Unitarians," by Granville Hicks, in the *Christian Register* for August 8, 1929.



Lyman Beecher. A portrait painted during his Presidency of Lane Theological Seminary in Cincinnati, Ohio (1832-1850).



L. W. Beecher,

An engraving from a portrait painted during his Boston Ministry (1820-1822)

on another without any cement between; about as wise as if a man should eat his meat one day, his vegetables the next, and his pies and cake on the third. . . . My desire would be to blend the united services of all the professors in raising up a perfect man," he added.

Supporting his contention that a theological teacher should be a preacher with a church, he wrote:

"The soul of eloquence is feeling, and in the ministry holy feeling, but feeling without social excitement is impossible and all eloquence unprompted by it is but parrot eloquence. . . . Of all mistakes made by great and good men, that of shutting up theological students on the Sabbath in a chapel to be edified by classical accuracy at the expense of feeling and untrammeled eloquence is one of the greatest."

In his farewell sermon to his congregation in 1830 he stated his reasons for accepting the presidency of Lane:

"I regard my acceptance as securing the establishment and endowment of a theological seminary bearing the same relation of priority and eminence at the West which Andover holds at the East. . . . And the question whether the first and leading seminary of the West shall be one which inculcates orthodoxy with or without revivals, is a question, in my view, of as great importance as was ever permitted a single human mind to decide. If I accept, I consider the question settled that a revival seminary takes the lead, and so much and so powerfully as inevitably to give a complexion probably forever to the doctrine and revivals of that great world."

Incredible as it may seem, he regarded the question as to whether this little struggling seminary should or should not promote religious revivals "of as great importance as was ever permitted a single human mind to decide!"

Lyman Beecher's terms were agreed to and he accepted both the presidency of Lane Seminary and the pastorate of the Second Presbyterian Church of Cincinnati with the understanding that he should devote to the latter duties such time as he could spare from the former. So in his fifty-sixth year Lyman Beecher resigned one of the most powerful and congenial churches of his faith, and relinquished the associations of a lifetime, to take charge of a little struggling divinity school in a pioneer city. Carried away by his infectious enthusiasm almost his whole family joined this hegira.

As soon as the Princeton Theological Seminary, headquarters for Old-School Calvinism, discovered that Lane was to be a New-School institution, they vowed vengeance upon it and selected Doctor Wilson, the leading Old-School minister of Cincinnati, to declare war upon Doctor Beecher and his seminary. He promptly accused Lyman Beecher of heresy and appealed first to the Presbytery, then to the Synod, and finally to the General Assembly, the final authority, to prefer charges against him, and try him. They all refused, and left Doctor Wilson no choice except to make peace or prefer charges himself, a responsibility which he hesitated to assume.

So with Wilson's heresy charges suspended over him like the sword of Damocles, Beecher forged ahead full-steam with his church and his seminary. The family at home, now consisting of his wife and three daughters, Catharine, Harriet and Isabella (a small child), and his sons, Henry Ward, Charles, Thomas and James, was settled in a plain but comfortable house at Walnut Hills in the outskirts of the city, adjoining the seminary grounds.

The undisputed leader of the graduating class in the seminary was Theodore Weld, later known to fame as a radical Abolitionist. Weld and his adherents got up a series of debates on slavery which the trustees tried to prohibit and the faculty to postpone. They were, however, held on nine successive evenings and at their conclusion a unanimous vote of

the student body, under Weld's dynamic leadership, declared for immediate emancipation of all slaves, the formation of an anti-slavery society as well as a society to elevate the colored population of the city through "social intercourse according to character, irrespective of color." Lyman Beecher, fearing the students would arouse what he called, "the slumbering demon of pro-slavery fanaticism," warned Weld: ". . . You are taking just the course to defeat your own object and prevent yourself from doing good. If you want to teach colored schools, I can fill your pockets with money, but if you will visit in colored families and walk with them in the streets you will be overwhelmed."

During the summer vacation of 1834, while Doctor Beecher and his prospective son-in-law, Professor Calvin Stowe, were in the East raising money for the struggling seminary, a committee of the trustees, alarmed by the violence of hostile opinion aroused by the ostentatious social intercourse of Weld and his followers with Negroes, publicly announced that rules would be adopted on the reassembling of the faculty, abolishing the anti-slavery society, and prohibiting public discussion of slavery by the students on pain of dismissal. The trustees finally yielded to public clamor and put such rules into effect before Doctor Beecher and his faculty returned whereupon the entire senior class of forty men, under the leadership of Weld, withdrew from the institution.

As soon as Doctor Beecher got back he had the obnoxious rulings modified, but the trustees refused to repeal them and the students to return. Arthur Tappan of New York, the donor of Doctor Beecher's own chair, himself a radical Abolitionist, came to the rescue of the seceding students by giving funds for a theological department at Oberlin College to which Weld and his followers went. William Lloyd Garrison's paper, *The Liberator*, commented on these events, "Lane Seminary is now to be regarded as strictly a Bastile of oppression—a spiritual Inquisition."

This was an ironic situation. Garrison had been one of Beecher's parishioners in Boston and one of the most ardent believers in his doctrine of immediate repentance. In fact, before he took up his campaign for immediate emancipation, he had said to Beecher, "Is not slavery a national sin?" Beecher agreed.

"Well, then," said Garrison, "in accordance with your doctrine of immediate repentance is it not the duty of this nation to repent immediately of the sin of slavery and emancipate the slaves?"

"Oh, Garrison, you can't reason that way!" protested Beecher. "Great economic and political questions can't be solved so simply. You must take into account what is expedient as well as what is right." And so the Beechers and Garrison parted company not to be reconciled until after the publication of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

While in Boston during the summer Lyman Beecher prepared his pamphlet, "A Plea for the West,"<sup>3</sup> in which he urged eastern philanthropists to help the schools and colleges of the West, pointing out that no amount of purely local effort and self-sacrifice would be sufficient.

Professor Stowe said of the printing of this pamphlet, "One day after the printers had been on tenterhooks for forty-eight hours for the copy, he [Doctor Beecher] hastily finished his MSS. in his study, crushed it into the corner of the hat that lay nearest him, clapped another hat on his head, drove down to the city, rushed up to the printing office and snatched off his hat.

"Here's your copy—h'm—h'm—well, if it isn't here it's somewhere else."

Lyman Beecher was always absent-minded, careless and disorderly. He exclaimed in his old age, "Owing to lack of

<sup>3</sup> For Lyman Beecher's bibliography see pp. 409 and 410.

training in orderliness as a child I've spent half my life looking for my hat!"

Doctor Wilson finally summoned courage personally to prefer heresy charges against Beecher and it was arranged that he should be tried before the Presbytery of his church in 1835. Lyman Beecher's doctrine of immediate repentance was, as mentioned, one of Doctor Wilson's main objects of attack.

"When the trial came on, I took all my books and sat down on the second stair of the pulpit," said Beecher. "It was in my church. I looked so quiet and meek my students were almost afraid I shouldn't come up to the mark. I had everything just then to weigh me down. My wife was lying at home on her dying bed. She did not live a fortnight after that. Then there was all the wear and tear of the seminary [his presidency had opened with an epidemic of cholera from which several students had died] and of my congregation. But when I had all my references and had nothing to do but extemporize, I felt easy. I had as much lawyer about me as Wilson and more. I never got into a corner and he never got out, though the fact is he made as good a case as could be made on the wrong side. . . . Presbytery acquitted me and he appealed to Synod."

Lyman Beecher wrote at the time that his trial was the greatest blessing because it gave him such an unexampled opportunity to place his views before the public. Strange as it may seem to us, the trial was a front-page newspaper sensation all over the country.

His son, Henry Ward, then a student in the seminary and living at home, described his father's departure for his second trial before the Synod in the fall of the same year:

" . . . Though of note as a public character he is not less famous and interesting in private life. Indeed, we who see him daily, imagine that he exhibits more un-

equivocal marks of genius in the domestic than in a wider sphere; for in the pulpit (thanks to the attention of Aunt Esther) he wears whole stockings, has decent handkerchiefs and cravats, a tidy coat and never wears one boot and one shoe together. . . . As if to put the broadest seal upon his genius, Nature seems to have ordained that he shall study half dressed. . . .

"At length the doctor completes his assortment of books and papers, packs or rather stuffs his clothes into a carpet bag—no key to lock it—ties the handles and leaves it gapping.

"At length we are ready to start. A trunk tumbles out of one side as Thomas tumbles in the other. I reverse the order—tumble Tom out, the trunk in. At length all are aboard and Father drives out of the yard, holding the reins in one hand, shaking hands with a student with the other, giving Charles directions with his mouth—at least that part not occupied with an apple; for, since apples are plenty, he has made it a practice to drive with one rein in the right hand and the other in the left, with an apple in each, biting them alternately, thus raising and lowering the reins like threads on a loom. Away we go, Charley horse on the full canter down the long hill, the carriage bouncing and bounding over the stones, Father alternately telling Tom how to get the harness mended, and showing me the true doctrine of original sin. Hurra! We thunder alongside the boat just in time."

While Lyman Beecher was acquitted by the Synod and his enemies dared not appeal to the General Assembly—the last word in Presbyterian Church authority—his accusers had so heavily committed themselves that his success was their failure. Hence they kept up guerrilla warfare against him for years, resorting to every form of misrepresentation and personal abuse. This greatly increased his difficulties in recruiting students and raising funds.

Immediately after Lyman Beecher's acquittal the first family reunion took place at Walnut Hills, and is here described by

a young man, a friend of Henry and Charles, who happened to be present:

"When Edward returned he brought Mary on from Hartford, William came down from Putnam, Ohio, George from Batavia, New York, Catharine and Harriet were here already, Henry and Charles at home too, besides Isabella, Thomas and James. These eleven! The first time they all ever met together! Mary had never seen James and she had seen Thomas but once.

"Such a time as they had! The old doctor was almost transported with joy. The affair had been under negotiation for some time. He returned from Dayton late on Saturday evening [where he had been tried for heresy]. The next morning they for the first time assembled in the parlor. There were more tears than words. The doctor attempted to pray but could scarcely speak. His full heart poured itself out in a flood of weeping. He could not go on. Edward continued and each in turn uttered some sentences of thanksgiving. They then began at the head and related their fortunes. After special prayer all joined hands and sang Old Hundred. . . .

"Edward preached in his father's pulpit in the morning, William in the afternoon, and George in the evening. Monday morning they assembled and, after reading and prayers in which all joined, they formed a circle. The doctor stood in the middle and gave them a thrilling speech. He then went round and gave them each a kiss and they had a happy dinner. . . ."

What with cholera, slavery, heresy and the business panic and industrial depression of 1837, in which Lyman Beecher lost his salary through the failure of Arthur Tappan, Lane Seminary nearly went to the wall. In fact, everybody connected with it gave up in despair except Lyman Beecher. "He worked," said Professor Stowe, "during all these difficulties like a Hercules and never lost hope or courage. Dis-

appointment followed disappointment and obstacle was heaped on obstacle. Ossa was piled on Pelion and Olympus on Ossa; friends fell off and foes multiplied; endowments diminished and salaries ceased; prejudices were inflamed and students were kept away. Still, he was hopeful and jovial, always good-natured, and never irritated."

Lyman Beecher himself commented on this low ebb of his fortunes. He had just returned from a trip to recruit students on which his success was meager. "When I got back to the seminary I found Stowe sick abed and all discouraged. Said ' 'twas all over—of no use—might just as well leave and go back East first as last.' 'Stowe,' said I, 'I've brought you twelve students. You've got no faith, and I've got nothing but faith. Get up and wash and eat bread and prepare to have a good class.' "

Lyman Beecher at sixty-one in 1836 devised the plan of what he called circulars to keep his large and now widely scattered family in touch with one another and with him. Each member of the family on receipt of this circular added his own message and sent it on to the next. One of these circular letters bore the postmarks: New Orleans, Louisiana; Jacksonville, Illinois; Zanesville, Ohio; Batavia, New York and Hartford, Connecticut. One direction, Reverend Mr. Beecher, served for all except two. The subjects touched upon were—George's perfectionism, the death of Edward Beecher's little daughter—Mrs. Stowe's flower seeds and the proper earth for her dahlias—Henry Ward's fatherly advice to his older brother George about premature publication—Doctor Beecher's admonition to William to write him personally—Professor Stowe's amused comments on the "patriarchal, paternal and most judicious counsel of Brother Henry"—William's expectations for a new vestry—and Catharine's suggestion that whoever held up a circular for more than a week be penalized by losing the privilege of receiving

the return one. By this means these many families, widely scattered geographically, of widely differing and sometimes antagonistic views, were held together year after year in bonds of patriarchal unity.

The Abolition movement, which, twenty years later, was to give his daughter, Harriet, a world-wide reputation, had almost destroyed Lyman Beecher's. "I regard the whole abolition movement, under its most influential leaders, with its distinctive maxims and modes of feeling, and also the whole temper, principles and action of the South in the justification of slavery as signal instances of infatuation permitted by Heaven for purposes of national retribution," wrote Lyman Beecher in 1838. "God never raised up such men as Garrison, and others like him, as the ministers of his mercy for purposes of peaceful reform, but only as the fit and fearful ministers of his vengeance upon a people incorrigibly wicked." Doctor Witherspoon, of South Carolina, an old friend of Doctor Beecher, wrote him, "I have been a slaveholder from my youth, and yet I detest it as the political and domestic curse of our Southern country. And yet I would contend to the death against Northern interference with Southern rights." Certainly a most natural and probably a widely held view among southerners of enlightenment and character!

The radical, or Garrisonian Abolitionists, demanded the immediate freeing of all slaves regardless of any and every other consideration. Garrison characterized the Constitution of the United States, because of its tolerance of slavery, as "a covenant with death and an agreement with Hell," and chose as his motto, "No union with slaveholders." The conservative anti-slavery men were Colonizationists. They advocated the gradual liberation of the slaves through their purchase and return to Africa. The Garrisonian Abolitionists hated, despised and distrusted the Colonizationists almost as much as they did the slaveholders themselves, while the Colonizationists denounced the Abolitionists as fanatics. In the

midst of all this rancor and backbiting Lyman Beecher calmly announced that he was both. "I am not apprised of the ground of controversy between the Colonizationists and the Abolitionists. I am myself both without perceiving in myself any inconsistency. Were it in my power to put an end to slavery immediately I would do it, but it is not. I can only pursue the measures best calculated, in my judgment, to get the slaves out of bondage in the shortest time, and best manner; and this, as I view the subject, is to make emancipation easy instead of difficult, to make use of the current of human fears and passions and interests when they may be made to set in our favor instead of attempting to row up-stream against them." At another time he described the Garrisonian Abolitionists as "men who would burn down their houses to get rid of the rats."

Lyman Beecher's position on slavery was temperamentally and intellectually identical with his theological position. Theologically he believed in the Old-School doctrine of foreordination—that is that everything that occurs in this world was foreordained by God to happen just as it does happen. He also believed in the New-School doctrine of man's free agency and hence his accountability for his acts. Both in theology and on the slave question he occupied positions which were commonly supposed to be diametrically opposed. This uncanny breadth of view caused not only his enemies but many less prejudiced critics to accuse him of being a time-server attempting "to carry water on both shoulders."

Slavery and theology became at this time curiously intermingled. The Presbyterian Church split into two parts: the Presbyterian Church of the North made up of New-School anti-slavery men, and the Presbyterian Church of the South made up of Old-School pro-slavery men. Lyman Beecher's heresy trial hastened this schism.

When about this time Doctor Beecher was driving to the city with his wife (having unwittingly, in the custom of the

times, worn out two wives, he had married in 1836 as his third, Mrs. Lydia Jackson of Boston), his daughter, Catharine, and a friend, he met on the worst part of the long hill eight great wagons, and was crowded off the road and rolled over and over down a steep declivity of some thirty feet. The teamsters, hearing his cries for help, came to the edge of the road, and peering into the darkness called, "How shall we get down there?" "Easy enough," was the reply. "Come as I did!"

A few days after this accident, from which they all miraculously escaped with bruises only, he rushed up-stairs and called out, "Wife, give me five dollars." One of the students needed immediate help.

"Why, husband," said she, "that is every cent we have."

"I can't help it," he replied, "the Lord will provide." And away he went with the five dollars.

The next day he came in with a wedding fee of fifty dollars and, showing it to his wife, exulted, "Didn't I tell you the Lord would provide?"

In the summer of 1846, when he was seventy-one, Lyman Beecher left his native land for the only time to go to England to attend a convention of the Christian Alliance in London—an organization made up of representatives of all the Protestant denominations. His imagination had been fired by the purposes of this convention and the expense money was furnished by the Lord as usual in the form of entirely unexpected gifts from strangers. He was one of the speakers at the World's Temperance Convention in London, addressing an immense audience in the Covent Garden Theater, and spoke on the same subject in various parts of England and Scotland. He also made at least one speech on Abolition in which he traced the history of the movement in America from Colonial days up to that time. Little did he realize that only seven years later his daughter, Harriet, would be feted in the same

city as the author of the most effective Abolition literature ever written!

His theological enemies took advantage of his absence to try to oust him from his presidency of Lane on the ground that he was a heretic, and hence illegally occupying the position. In this final attack, just as in all their previous efforts, they failed, but he was, of course, put to trouble and expense in defending himself.

Shortly after his return from England Lyman Beecher sent what was probably his first telegram. His son, Thomas, the recipient of the message, described the circumstances in a letter to his brother, Charles:

"In 1846-7 Father was sorely exercised by the severity of my work in Philadelphia. He feared a sudden breakdown. His urgency could not abide the slowness of the mail; he must save me by telegraph—I suspect his very first telegram. Aided by a daughter he undertook his costly ten words to save a son thus:

"My very dear son—I have worked more—"

"Daughter—'Father, father, you can't write so much; don't say "my very dear son."'

"Dear son—Trust a father's experience and let me tell you—"

"Daughter—'No, no, father, skip all that. You can't make love by telegraph. Tom knows your love.'

"An hour was spent learning how to suppress his exuberant affection till at last the message came into shape thus:

"'Ease up. Rest—sleep—exercise. Cold water—rub. No tobacco. Father.'"

Dr. Thomas Brainard of Philadelphia, who had been Doctor Beecher's assistant when he was the minister of the Second Presbyterian Church in Cincinnati, said of him at the time he retired at the age of seventy-five from the presidency of Lane Seminary: "His sayings have been more frequently

quoted in public and private life than those of any other American, Benjamin Franklin excepted." If this was true when Doctor Brainard said it, it certainly soon ceased to be, because he was outshone in this respect by his own son, Henry Ward, to say nothing of Abraham Lincoln, and probably others. Doctor Brainard gave these as typical illustrations of Lyman Beecher's sayings: "A brother minister was making a lame argument in Presbytery. 'Brainard,' said the Doctor, 'I had rather be before that gun than behind it.' Another minister of the Presbytery who was greatly alarmed for the orthodoxy of the Church, had a habit of looking up and swinging his head to and fro while he belabored the New School. In the midst of one of his prosy speeches the Doctor grew impatient. 'Brainard,' said he, 'did you ever know a man who looked to Heaven so much for light and got so little?'"

When he was asked what he thought of Daniel Webster's speech in reply to Hayne's argument for nullification he blurted out explosively, "What do I think of it? It's a cannon-ball through a basket of eggs!" This comment must have pleased Webster, who had said of Beecher, "He is the most keen-sighted, far-sighted man in the United States."<sup>4</sup>

In 1851 Lyman Beecher returned to the East and spent the summer with his daughter, Harriet, and her husband, Professor Stowe, at Brunswick, Maine. Here he devoted himself, with the assistance of a daughter-in-law, to preparing for the press his theological writings. They were published the next year under the title, *Views on Theology*, and came out just after his daughter's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and just before his son Edward's *The Conflict of Ages*. The book was not a great success. The intense interest in theology of thirty years before had begun to wane. Also Lyman Beecher, although a

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<sup>4</sup> From *Lyman Beecher, D.D., Anecdotes*, by H. P. Hedges, in the East Hampton Historical Society.

great personality, was not a great theologian. Perhaps even the mild success the work did achieve was due in part to the fact that he was the father of his daughter, Harriet, and his sons, Edward and Henry Ward. *The Conflict of Ages*, on the other hand, made a stir in theological circles comparable to that made by *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in the world at large. Lyman Beecher said to his son, Edward, after reading his book, "Edward, you've destroyed the Calvinistic barns, but I hope you don't delude yourself that the animals are going into your little theological hencoop!"

After a few years in Boston, working on his *Autobiography and Correspondence*, which he largely talked to his children, and doing casual writing and preaching, Lyman Beecher moved to Brooklyn, where he bought a house on Willow Street, to spend the remainder of his life near his son, Henry Ward, of whom he said, "Thought I could preach 'til I heard Henry." By this time his mind, as one of his children described it, "was gradually retreating and hiding itself as in some deep mysterious cave." He was a regular attendant at Plymouth Church where he would sit looking up at his son with an expression of beatific satisfaction on his old face. It was as well for the old man's peace of mind that he had lost his mental grasp because otherwise he would have been pained by, what would have appeared to him, the heresies uttered by his beloved son.

While his mind grew feebler, his bodily strength remained almost unimpaired. "The day he was eighty-one," remarked Professor Stowe, "he was with me in Andover, and wished to attend my lecture in the Seminary. He was not quite ready when the bell rang, and I walked on in the usual path without him. Presently he came skipping across lots, laid his hand on top of the five-barred fence, which he cleared at a bound, and was in the lecture-room before me." When he no longer had mental strength, by a kind of reversion to type, he returned to the physical prowess which had distinguished his ancestors.

When on his way to Andover to visit he would take out his false teeth, which didn't fit well and were uncomfortable, and place them on the seat beside him in the stage. Then when he reached his destination and got out he would forget them. The supper bell would remind him of the missing teeth. Some member of the family would call to a grandson, "Charley, Grandpa has left his teeth in the stage again so run right over to Mary O'Brien's and get them for him."

This was a welcome errand for Charley because Mary O'Brien, the family cook until her marriage to John O'Brien, the stage-driver, always gave him delicious gingerbread.

As soon as Charley appeared at the back door of the O'Brien cottage, Mary would shout to her husband, "Oh, John, here's little Charley come agin after the old gentleman's teath. Take the lantern an' go an' look for the teath while I give Charley some of me new hot gingerbread." So, munching the gingerbread and clutching the teeth, Charley would run home and give the teeth to his grandfather who would take out of his pocket a red bandanna handkerchief, polish them off, clap them into his mouth and eat his supper.

Lyman Beecher's repartee, too, remained with him until the end. One day, during the closing year of his life, as he lay on a sofa, his daughter, Mrs. Stowe, sat beside him brushing his long white hair. His eyes were fixed upon the window, and the expression on his face was peculiarly serene. "Do you know," she said, "that you are a very handsome old gentleman?" With a twinkle he replied, "Oh, Hattie, tell me something new!"

He requested that he be buried beside his life-long friend, Doctor Taylor, of the Yale Divinity School, by whose side he had fought some of the fiercest theological battles of their day. He wanted to be buried "where it would do the most good. The young men will come and see where Brother Taylor and I are buried and it will do them good. . . ." An emphatic example of being practical till the end!

As he lay dying in his eighty-eighth year, in January, 1863, he quoted the words of St. Paul, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; henceforth there is laid up for me a crown, which God, the righteous Judge, will give me at that day." . . . That is my testimony—write it down—that is my testimony," and, so saying, he closed his tempestuous career.

## CHAPTER IV

### CATHARINE BEECHER: 1800-1878

#### LOVE AND TRAGEDY

“OH, THOU little immortal!” exclaimed young Lyman Beecher, as Catharine Esther, his first-born, was placed in his arms on September 6, 1800. She was named after his Aunt Benton who brought him up, and his young mother who had survived his birth by two days only. That conviction of individual immortality gave a transcendent importance and permanent significance to the birth of a human being which it is difficult for us to appreciate.

But her father might have felt that she was a little viper instead of a little immortal, had he known that she was to become one of the most powerful enemies of the cherished doctrines of his faith, and all on account of a love-affair.

Although starting with a feeble constitution, the sea air and placid wholesomeness of the East Hampton of her day soon developed Catharine into a sturdy little girl overflowing with mirth and mischief. Her serene mother, Roxana, she revered; her lively volatile father became her companion and playmate; and her exquisite Aunt Mary Foote Hubbard, her mother’s sister, was as she expressed it, “the poetry of my childhood.”

“Most observing and most sympathizing was she with all the little half-fledged wants and ambitions of childhood,” said Catharine in her father’s autobiography. “I remember my imagination had been fired by hearing her read in some poem of the curls of some fair heroine dropping on her book; and so, one day, with great labor, I coaxed my hair into curl, placed myself conspicuously before her, with the curls dropping on the page of an open book. She saw the artifice and

said, in her sweetest tones, ‘Oh, mother, come here and see these beautiful ringlets.’” These youthful “ringlets” were the precursors of the cork-screw curls for which she was noted as an old lady.

“I remember him more as a playmate than in any other character during my childhood,” she wrote of her father. “He was fond of playing pranks upon us and trying the queerest experiments with us, for his amusement as well as ours. I remember once he swung me out of the window by the hands, to see if it would frighten me, which it did not in the least. . . . He taught me to catch fish, and I was his constant companion, riding in his chaise in my little chair to the villages around, where he went to hold meetings. Gradually, as I grew older, I began to share with mother in his more elevated trains of thought.”

When Catharine was ten, her father accepted the call to the Congregational Church of Litchfield, Connecticut, and the family was transferred from the plains of East Hampton, Long Island, where the ocean was the only outstanding natural beauty, to the famed Berkshire Hills of one of New England’s intellectual centers. She was not long a lone child among adults. Four of her twelve brothers and sisters had arrived, one had gone—the first little Harriet. There remained William, Edward, Mary and George.

The rats made a vivid impression upon all the occupants of the old white parsonage on broad elm-shaded North Street. “Rats abundant, as usual,” commented Lyman in a letter, “rattle over our head o’ nights in troops.” When, years later, Catharine became the poet laureate of the family, these parsonage rats inspired some of her efforts. She described in prose what she termed a “Ratification Meeting at Parson Beecher’s.” This meeting was attended by “garret rats, cellar rats, store-room rats and kitchen rats,” and was held over Aunt Esther’s room, which was especially com-

fortable as nearest the Russian stove. "The Committee [of Inquiry] reported that there was a safe and easy passage into the chamber where Catharine, Mary, Harriet and Isabella slept, two in the upper bed and two in the trundle bed." . . . The following is an account of the visit of the Rat Committee by one of the young ladies of the room visited:

"One rat slipped on Miss Katy's shoes  
And danced about the room  
While with the tongs and candlestick  
Two others kept the tune.

"One rat jumped onto Harriet's bed  
And began to gnaw her nose.  
The other chose another extreme,  
And nibbled Mary's toes—"

And so the verse ran on for seven more stanzas.

It seems fitting to turn from the parsonage rats to their mortal enemies, the parsonage cats, whom the family poet-laureate also memorialized in verse.

"——last week was interred," said Catharine in a letter to Edward, "Tom junior, with funeral honors, by the side of old Tom of happy memory. What a fatal mortality there is among the cats of the Parsonage! Our Harriet is chief mourner always at their funerals. She asked for what she called an epithet for the grave-stone of Tom junior, which I gave as follows:

" 'Here died our kit,  
Who had a fit,  
And acted queer.  
Shot with a gun,  
Her race is run,  
And she lies here.' "

Litchfield was an educational center, with Judge Tappan Reeve's Law School, the first to be opened in America, and

Miss Sarah Pierce's School for "young ladies," one of the best of its day. The proximity of these two schools, drawing their students from the "first families" of the land, and situated amid the romantic beauties of this stately village, led to much match-making. Lyman Beecher acted as voluntary spiritual adviser to Miss Pierce's School, and in return his daughters were welcomed as students free of charge. "Miss Pierce had a quiet relish for humor and fun," said Catharine, "that made her very lenient toward one who never was any special credit to her as a pupil. During the whole of my training under her care, with the exception of practicing on the piano, map-drawing, and a little painting, I did little else than play. There was a curious fashion among the girls of helping themselves by guessing, which I practiced so adroitly that, with a few snatches at my books, I slipped through my recitations as a tolerably decent scholar. Occasionally my kind teacher wondered how and when my lessons were learned, and complimented me as the 'busiest of all creatures in doing nothing.'"

"I am glad to hear such accounts of the children, especially Catharine," wrote Mary Hubbard to her brother-in-law, Lyman Beecher. "She has so much intellect that it is your duty to pay the utmost attention to the temper, so that we may love what we are compelled to admire."

So all went on merrily in the Litchfield parsonage, at least for the children, until the year 1813, when the shadow of death first settled upon the household, and the children's adored and fascinating Aunt Mary Hubbard was taken from them by consumption—that merciless and ubiquitous scourge of the New England women of that day.

And after a respite of only three years, the same relentless disease carried off Roxana, the stately and accomplished mother. At one stroke, there descended upon the exuberant and fun-loving sixteen-year-old daughter, a crushing grief and

a heavy responsibility. With tearful adherence to her rôle as the family poet, she wrote a funeral ode to the departed mother, the first and last two stanzas of which ran:

“The busy hum of day is o'er,  
    The scene is sweet and still,  
And modest eve, with blushes warm,  
    Walks o'er the western hill.

“Father in Heaven, my mother's God,  
    Oh, grant before Thy seat,  
Among the blessed sons of light,  
    Parent and child may meet.

“There may I see her smiling face,  
    And hear her gentle voice;  
And, gladden'd by thy gracious smile,  
    Through endless years rejoice.”

These verses all the older children dutifully, amid sobs, learned to recite.

At this time Lyman Beecher's stepmother and sister, Esther, sacrificed their own peace and quiet to take charge of the motherless household. Catharine said of her father in this connection:

“He gently and tenderly made me understand the great kindness of Grandma and Aunt Esther in giving up their own quiet and comfort to take care of us; he awakened my sympathy for Aunt Esther in her new and difficult position; he stimulated my generous ambition to supply my mother's place in the care of the younger children. . . .

“Happily, our mother's skill in household handicraft was bequeathed in some measure to her daughters, and thus stimulated, I, for the first time, undertook all the labor of cutting, fitting and making all the clothing of the children, as well as my own. . . . So also, under Aunt Esther's careful training, Mary and I were

initiated into all the arts of kitchen labor, cheered and animated by the consciousness that it comforted Father and relieved Aunt Esther."

And so things went along in the parsonage for two years, or until Lyman Beecher met, wooed and won Harriet Porter and brought her home in his chaise as the new mother. As soon as Catharine heard of her father's engagement, she wrote in the following punctilious vein to her prospective step-mother:

"Dear Madam,

"The prospect of the connection to take place between my father and yourself, and the tender alliance so soon to subsist between you and this family, give me the liberty and pleasure of addressing you, though I have never enjoyed the satisfaction of personal acquaintance. . . .

"I speak for myself, and for all my brothers and sisters who are capable of considering the extent of their obligation to you, when we promise to make it our constant study to render to you the affection, obedience and all the kind offices which we should wish to pay our own mother were she now restored to us from the grave. The sacred name of *mother*, so bound up in our hearts, would alone entitle you to the most undeviating affection and respect.

"My brothers and sisters desire to be remembered to her who, they trust, will soon be their dear protector and friend, and join their affectionate salutations with those of one who hopes ere long to be truly your dutiful and affectionate daughter."

One wonders whether this immaculate effusion amused as well as pleased this prospective mother, who said, in her first letter to her sister from Litchfield, "Catharine is a fine-looking girl, and in her mind I find all that I expected. She is not handsome, yet there is hardly anyone who appears better. . . ."

Catharine's naturally exuberant spirits and abounding vitality, perhaps aided by the lessened responsibility on the arrival of the new mother, seem soon to have restored her normal cheerfulness. From Boston where she was visiting relatives, she wrote to her most intimate girl friend, Louisa Wait, in Litchfield, describing in ecstatic terms the beauties of "Aunt Goddard's" garden and adding, "I told Lucy [the girl friend who was with her] I loved her and everybody else ten thousand times more than ever, and I was right glad there was no gentleman with us for I should most assuredly have fallen in love in such a beautiful spot—— Write immediately, my dear Louisa," she concluded, "and tell me everything, particularly about my dear home. It is the remembrance of that home and my kind friends on 'the hill' that gives enjoyment to my pleasures here. . . ."

At this very time, curiously enough, the young man whom Catharine was very shortly to meet and fall in love with was spending the week-end in her home-town in the course of a journey by chaise through the Berkshires. This was Alexander Metcalf Fisher, already known to fame as the mathematical genius of Yale College. At the age of ten he found his school arithmetic unsatisfactory and prepared a better one which he called *A Practical Arithmetic*, the manuscript of which may be seen to-day in the Alexander Metcalf Fisher Collection of the Yale University Library.

Fisher entered Yale at fourteen, and graduated at eighteen in 1813, as the "first scholar in his class." In his mathematics courses in his sophomore year, according to his colleague, Professor Olmstead, "he supplied every demonstration that was omitted in the text-book and occasionally detected fallacies in the authors and demonstrated the correctness of his conclusions." After graduation he went for a year to the Andover Theological Seminary, and then returned to Yale as a tutor. In 1818, at the age of twenty-three, he was appointed adjunct professor of mathematics and natural philosophy (what we

would call physics) and two years later was made full professor.

His range of scholarship covered mathematics, philosophy, physics, theology and astronomy (he made the computations from an eclipse in one day—a record time); also Hebrew, Latin and Greek, architecture and music (he both played on the piano and composed). He was the Secretary of the Phi Beta Kappa Society. He wrote a grammar of the Hebrew language, presumably during his year at the Andover Theological Seminary. He wrote a book on astronomy called *A Journey to the Moon and Some of the Planets*. He also contributed to the *Journal of Science* an article on “Musical Temperament” which was regarded as a masterly production in Europe as well as in this country.

Turning back to Litchfield to the visit of this young prodigy during the absence of the as yet unseen lady of his love, he said in his diary<sup>1</sup> that that was the first “Sabbath” he had ever spent in a “public house.” He does not seem, however, to have spent it in an unseemly manner, as he mentioned having heard Dr. Lyman Beecher preach both in the morning and the afternoon. “The only acquaintance whom I have found in town,” he commented, “is Miss W., a young lady of the female school here, whose amiableness of character had interested me much in her behalf.” Miss W. was apparently an incipient pre-rival of Catharine.

He said of a fellow-guest at the public house, General P. R. of Albany:

“He is one of the wealthiest men in the State of N. Y., and has been an extensive contributor to religious objects. After the late report of the Board [the Board of Home Missions of which Lyman Beecher was one of the founders] was read, he made them a contribution of 500 dollars. He is said to be attentive to the subject of religion;

<sup>1</sup> Also in the Fisher Collection of the Yale Library.

but doubts are entertained concerning his being a religious man. The circumstance of his leaving town in his carriage this afternoon is a suspicious one as it concerns his religious character; but no decisive inference perhaps ought to be drawn from this breach of the laws of the State till the motives which led him to it are known."

In addition to his long list of more substantial accomplishments, the young professor wrote verses. He also read assiduously the verses of others. He was particularly attracted by those signed C.D.D. which appeared in *The Christian Spectator*. On inquiry he discovered that C.D.D. was Catharine Beecher, the daughter of Dr. Lyman Beecher, whom he had heard preach in Litchfield. Her father was one of the founders of the paper and a regular contributor who signed his contributions D.D. Consequently the daughter had taken as her signature C.D.D. It immediately became one of the aspirations of the bashful young professor, who usually shunned social intercourse, to make the acquaintance of the Litchfield "poetess," C.D.D.

Accordingly, when he found that a clergyman classmate of his was to preach for Doctor Beecher in Litchfield, he persuaded him to take him along. After listening to his friend's long sermon with admirably concealed impatience, he won the coveted introduction to C.D.D. He walked home with her, was invited to stay to Sunday dinner and escorted her to the afternoon service. And when not at table or in church, the two young poet-musicians spent all the time at the old battered parsonage piano, singing their songs and reciting their verses to each other.

Not long after, the young mathematician called on Doctor Beecher and requested his permission "to make his addresses" to his daughter. The Doctor's explosively enthusiastic assent took the dignified young scholar's breath away. As an expert revivalist, the Doctor was a good judge of the hearts of men.

At the age of nineteen Catharine determined to do her part toward balancing the family budget by becoming self-supporting. In eighteen months she equipped herself to teach the piano, drawing and painting, and secured a position in a girls' school in New London, Connecticut. Her success in learning when she had a definite object, in distinction from her previous desultory floundering, convinced her that a definite purpose was an essential stimulus to effective studying.

Meantime, the young teacher in New London and the young professor in New Haven corresponded regularly, and saw each other occasionally. Early in 1822 Catharine wrote from Litchfield, to her friend, Louisa Wait, in Philadelphia, this revealing letter.

"Now I suppose I must tell you all about it. I wish you was lying beside me warm in bed, and I could tell you a mighty *interesting* tale but now I can barely give you the outline which you must fill up. Soon after you left here I received a queer letter from the Professor and I returned a queer answer, and our correspondence continud with an abundance of *spunk* on both sides, until I refused to correspond any longer—this brought matters to a *crisis* as the doctors say—he proposed a personal interview to which I finally consented, and last Tuesday evening he arrived—and you cannot think what a long string of misunderstandings there was *all around*, but we finally both found that we both loved each other too well to quarrel any longer and we soon met on such terms as all lovers should meet. He staid two or three days and I soon felt no doubt that I had gained the *whole* heart of one whose equal I never saw both as it represents intellect and all that is amiable and desirable in private character. I could not ask for more delicacy and tenderness—all that I regret is that we must be so soon and so long separated. The first of April he sails for England, will also visit Scotland, Holland, and France, will spend two or three months in Paris to perfect himself in the

pronunciation of the French, and will probably return in the succeeding April, tho' he says perhaps he shall not need to stay more than eight months. . . .”

In a later letter to Louisa, Catharine continued:

“He (Professor Fisher) came up last week to make a parting visit and is now about to sail for Europe and it will *seem* a long time before I can hear from him. . . . He has the prospect of a most profitable and delightful time—he has recommendations to all the Universities in England and Scotland, and to most of the great scientific characters there and in France. . . . How much he will have to tell me, and how happy we shall be when we meet again! . . .”

A little earlier, Lyman Beecher had written a letter to his brother-in-law, George Foote, in Guilford, Connecticut, in which he mentioned: “We have lately had a visit from Prof. Fisher, which has terminated in a settled connection, much to my satisfaction, as well as of the parties. He goes to Europe in the spring, and returns in a year and then will expect to be married.”

Some months earlier, Professor Fisher had received this apparently prophetic letter<sup>2</sup> from his father, Caleb Fisher, a substantial farmer in Franklin, Massachusetts:

“I have laid aside my scythe and rake and am about to gratify you as well as I can with a short letter. . . .

“You gave a pretty broad hint in Willard’s letter [his brother] of the 6th inst. (if I mistake not) of your having almost made up your mind to spend a great part of next year in Europe. This I think if you should put your project into execution, must give your friends, and especially your parents, a trial of feelings, which we have never experienced before. I hope, however, you will

<sup>2</sup>Now in the possession of Professor Fisher’s grandnephew, Willard J. Fisher.

count the cost before you fully make up your mind to undertake so hazardous an enterprise. The expenses of such a tour (you know) must be very great, if the privilege should be granted you of ever returning to your native country; yet, altho' the expenses should be great, how will ten or fifteen hundred dollars compare with the risk of your life that you must experience. Should 30 men be placed in a situation where it is certain that one of them must be killed, would you for a trifle be one of that number? Once more, I think you cannot know the feelings that your friends must experience, should you place yourself on the great deep, and after having waited six months, hear nothing from you—then waiting again for months with much anxiety, we may perhaps receive intelligence that you are no more or be led to conclude that we shall no more hear from you."

Picture the scene—the great immaculate kitchen, the farmer after "washing up," sitting down to the table on which his wife has carefully laid out the infrequently used writing materials, putting on his brass-rimmed spectacles, and writing, with work-stiffened hands, his prophetic warning, which he then reads to the anxious mother.

The parents' warning was brushed aside, just as they probably expected it would be, and the young man sailed on the packet ship, *Albion*, on April 1, 1822. This note, written from the ship off Sandy Hook, to his friend and colleague, Professor Kingsley, shows that the son in no way shared his parents' forebodings:

"We have apparently everything to promise a quick, safe and comfortable passage. Capt. Williams is considered as the first commander from this port, and his ship has no superior. As soon as I get well seated in some coffee-house in Liverpool you may expect to hear more from me.

"Your affectionate friend,  
"A. M. FISHER.

"I told Mr. S. this morning that he had my last words, but it is *certain* that you have them.

"P.S. You will oblige me if you will pass this into the hand of Beecher and request him to let his friends in L. know the last news from me."

Although not sharing his parents' fears, the young Professor, being the kind of a man who took nothing for granted, also sent back this letter by the pilot.

"Honored Parents:

"I have not thought it necessary in taking my departure for Europe to dispose of my property with the formality of a will; yet as accidents may occur, and my life may possibly be taken away too suddenly to admit of making any arrangements of my affairs, I leave with President Day, to be handed to you in case of my decease, my wish in regard to my money at interest and funds. I think you will admit it to be a reasonable distribution and will comply with it.

"This is, that my friend Catharine E. Beecher should receive two thousand dollars and you the remainder. I should hope this last would be about equal to the sums you have charged against me for my education. Although I cannot devise exactly what would be the amount of my salary yet payable. It will of course be continued to the time of my decease: and I should hope that in consideration of the personal expenses I am about incurring for the benefit of College, the Corporation would be willing to make the salary of the college year, in the event of my decease, complete. . . .

"Your affectionate son,

"A. M. FISHER.

"(Address)

"Mr. Caleb Fisher,  
Franklin, Mass.

"To be sent only in case of my decease abroad; otherwise to be returned to me.

"A. M. FISHER."<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>These letters are now in the Alexander Metcalf Fisher Collection of the Yale University Library.

For the next two months neither the anxious parents on their farm in Franklin nor the eager young fiancée in the parsonage at Litchfield heard anything of the ship *Albion* or her passenger, but on the second of June, the stage brought the latter this heart-crushing letter from her father in New Haven:

“My dear Child,

“On entering the city last evening, the first intelligence I met filled my heart with pain. It is all but certain that Professor Fisher is no more. . . .

“Thus have perished our earthly hopes, plans and prospects. Thus the hopes of Yale College, and of our country, and, I may say, of Europe, which had begun to know his promise, are dashed. The waves of the Atlantic commissioned by Heaven, have buried them all.

“And now, my child, I must say that, though my heart in the beginning was set upon this connection, I have been kept from ever enjoying it by anticipation, even for an hour. The suspense in which my life has been held, the threatening of your life, with the impression of uncertainty about all things earthly taught me by the lesson of the last six years, have kept my anticipations in check, and prepared me, with less surprise and severity of disappointment, to meet this new scene of sorrow.

“On that which will force itself on your pained heart with respect to the condition of his present existence in the eternal state, I can only say that many did and will indulge the hope that he was pious, though without such evidence as caused him to indulge hope. . . .

“But on this subject we can not remove the veil which God allows to rest upon it, and have no absolute resting-place but submission to his perfect administration.

“And now, my dear child, what will you do? Will you turn at length to God, and set your affections on things above, or cling to the ship-wrecked hopes of earthly good? Will you send your thoughts to heaven and find peace, or to the cliffs and winds and waves of Ireland, to be afflicted, tossed with tempest and not comforted?

"Till I come, farewell. May God preserve you, and give me the joy of beholding life spring from death."

As implied by this letter of sympathy, so singular to our ears, the ship *Albion* had been wrecked in a storm on the coast of Ireland. On the twenty-second of April, she was driven, rudderless and helpless, in a pitiless gale, upon the cliffs of Old Head near Kinsale, Ireland. One only of her twenty-three cabin passengers was saved.

## CHAPTER V

### CATHARINE BEECHER

#### PURITAN HERETIC

IN THE view of the Calvinists, what happened to human beings in their brief passage through this world was of trivial importance compared with their eternal happiness in Heaven or their never-ending torments in Hell. Hence, to those who had loved the young professor, the supremely important question was whether he had gone to Heaven or to Hell. He had been exemplary in conduct from his birth up, but that was merely the "natural goodness," against which Lyman Beecher had preached and warned his Roxana, and which was utterly ineffective in saving one's soul—in getting one into Heaven. Heaven could be attained only through supernatural intervention working through the semi-mystical and semi-psychical process known as conversion. Therefore, except for the off-chance that he might have been converted during his last hours of life amid the gale, he had gone down into the unending tortures of Hell. This chance was the "hope" that Lyman Beecher referred to in his letter. Big-hearted man though he was, under the terrific pressure of agonizing sympathy for his passionately loved daughter in her extremity of grief and fear, "hope" was the strongest word which the cruel bonds of his belief would permit him to use. Temporarily important as it was that he should give his stricken daughter sympathy, it was of supreme, eternal importance that he should use this tragedy as a means of saving her from the hideous fate of never-ending misery which had presumably already overtaken her unfortunate lover.

In a letter written a few days later to her brother Edward, then a senior in Yale, Catharine moaned:

"Your letter came at a time when no sympathy could soothe a grief 'that knows not consolation's name.' Yet it was not so much the ruined hopes of future life, it was dismay and apprehension for his immortal spirit. Oh, Edward, where is he now? Are the noble faculties of such a mind doomed to everlasting woe . . . ? Could I but be assured that he was now forever safe, I would not repine. . . ."

While these earnest but futile efforts at comfort were going on, Catharine received this further letter from Edward, who had been converted recently and decided to enter the ministry:

"From the time that I disclosed to you my trifling troubles I found in you so much kindness and affection . . . that now in your sorrow should I joy to comfort you. . . . But, my dear Catharine, though your loss is great I cannot feel that your hopes are all blasted. Oh, why cannot hopes of immortal happiness rise in your mind? Then although you would feel that this world was not your home, it would not be a comfortless abode to you. You have talent and influence, and cannot you consecrate them to the service of that Saviour who died for you and live to do good? . . . ."

"Oh, let the tide of benevolence and love once flow in your heart it will increase forever and bury all your sorrows. There is no pleasure like that of doing good. . . . ."

"Mr. Fisher I hope and believe is not lost. This is the belief of all who knew him. . . . ."

"Let us think of him as in a higher sphere of blessedness and happiness and his mind like the rising sun bursting from the twilight of earthly knowledge to greater and more sublime conceptions. . . . ."

This letter shows why Edward exercised a greater influence over Catharine than any one except her father. In this, her

time of black despair and shuddering fears, he expressed the unutterably consoling belief—not merely the hope—that her lover was not suffering the torments of the damned in Hell. Being a generation further removed from the pitiless logic of Calvinism, his conscience permitted him to express a belief where his father dared only hazard a hope. Here, too, he pointed out to her the way out of her sorrows—the way she in fact chose, to live to do good.

Catharine received a further letter from Edward giving this account of her lover's final hours, as told him by the sole surviving passenger of the *Albion*, with whom he had just talked:

"He said he [Fisher] was the most industrious man he ever saw. He seemed eager to gain information from everybody and everything. When not engaged with his journal or books or calculations he was making observations on the temperature of the water, and was frequently in earnest conversation with the Captain and more intelligent passengers. He seemed to know something on every subject and had a peculiar talent for drawing out the resources of others. . . .

"When the vessel shipped the first sea which threw them into such dreadful confusion, about seven hours before she struck, Mr. Fisher received a hurt on the face. From that time one of the remaining compasses was entrusted to his care in his stateroom, where he continued the greater part of the time after and cried out their course as the Captain enquired from the deck which way the ship headed? He thinks Prof. Fisher was more fully aware of their danger than any other passenger as he had made his calculations and knew where they were and the geography of the coast towards which they were driving. . . .

"The last thing he saw of him he was standing at his stateroom door, the blinds down so as to expose the upper half of his person, one side of his face bloody, nothing in his hands, his head down and his countenance exhibiting deep and anxious meditation."



Professor Alexander Metcalf Fisher. A portrait by Samuel Finley Breese Morse (inventor of the telegraph), now hanging in the President's room, Memorial Hall, Yale University.



Catharine Beecher as the Head of the Hartford Female Seminary in 1870,  
founded by her forty-seven years before

One can imagine how this picture of her lover in his final moments riveted itself upon the mental vision of the young girl!

Although Henry Ward was only a boy of ten at the time of the tragedy, he described many years later how he recollects distinctly when the news came of Fisher's loss at sea and the utter breaking down of his sister Catharine when it was communicated to her. "It took the form of breaking up and destroying all the religious teachings of her life," he commented. "The doctrines she had learned did not sustain her and he remembered seeing her sitting in his father's study and his father talking to her and trying to comfort her. . . ."

Here was the scene! The dynamic, ruddy-faced father sitting at his disordered desk with the tears streaming down his cheeks. Beside him sat his one-time exuberant fun-loving twenty-two-year-old daughter—her eyes swollen from crying—trying to choke back her sobs. And looking in upon them unobserved from the hall, was a clumsy bashful red-cheeked boy, his eyes wide with his vaguely comprehending sense of family tragedy.

The special tragedy of the situation was that the tenderly sympathetic father could not, chained as he was by his inexorable beliefs, give his desperately grieving daughter the only assurance which would really comfort her—the assurance that her lover was not suffering the torments of the damned. Her need, and the pitiful crumbs of comfort he was permitted by his beliefs to give her, may be gathered from their letters of the time. Catharine thus bemoaned her fate:

"I then felt that I was created a miserable, helpless creature; that I and all my fellow-men were placed under a severe law which we were naturally unable to obey, and threatened with everlasting despair for violating one of its precepts. It seemed to me that my lost friend had done all that unassisted human strength could do; and often the dreadful thought came over me that all was in vain,

and that he was wailing that he had ever been born, in that dark world where hope never comes, and that I was following his steps to that dreadful scene. . . .”

Meantime, her weeping father exhorted her not to “murmur” against God, to remember all His blessings to her, how much worse He might have treated her were it not for His infinite mercy, how, what He had done, was for her good, etc.

“Thousands now in heaven,” he added, “may say doubtless, ‘we should have perished if God had not afflicted us beyond measure. By terrible things in righteousness he redeemed us.’ He turned the earth into a wilderness and filled their hearts with sighs and anguish before they would bow before the Sceptre of the Almighty, and who can tell but what the great and good being who is full of compassion and doth not willingly afflict, is preparing for your heart a cloudless day and for your tongue an everlasting song.”

That flight had in it some of the grandeur of an old Hebrew prophet, but it wasn’t the consolation his poor daughter needed. Nor was this:

“I believe that Mr. Fisher was a man of piety, tho’ it does not appear that he ever had the consolation of believing it concerning himself [he had been reading Fisher’s diary]. . . . That God is influenced in his sovereign determinations by the conduct of sinners, I believe—and that there is more reason to hope for one whose whole life has been an example of excellence than for one who has spent all his days in vice and sin, is most certain. . . .”

This father, yearning to console his broken-hearted daughter, by straining his beliefs to the utmost, succeeded in assuring her that there was more reason to hope that her lover had escaped hell-fire than there would have been had he devoted himself to vice and sin.

Edward also wrote her about the memorial service which was held in Fisher's memory in the college chapel, of a similar service held by Yale graduates in the Brick Church in New York, and of the many obituary notices which had appeared and were projected, and how the entire college, students as well as faculty, were wearing crape for the term. And, finally, he sent her this description of Fisher's portrait which had been painted by Samuel F. B. Morse, who later invented the telegraph:

"Mr. Fisher's picture is here. Mr. Morse from recollection and from the portrait by Munson has made a very good likeness—better than the first. He is represented as sitting at a table with papers before him, in an attitude of thought, and with a pensive and rather melancholy expression of countenance. In the background is a dark sky, a flash of lightning, and a tempestuous sea. The effect of the whole is melancholy. . . . This is to be suspended in the Philosophy chamber, where he used to deliver his lectures.<sup>1</sup> An engraving of it on a small scale is nearly complete, and will be published in Mr. Silliman's Journal of Arts and Sciences. . . ."

As if determined to spare herself nothing, Catharine next went to visit her lover's grief-stricken family in Franklin, Massachusetts. The personally gentle and kind but theologically ruthless Calvinist, Doctor Emmons, was the minister of the town. The Sunday after Catharine's arrival he preached on the death of Professor Fisher.

One may imagine the scene in the old wind-swept barn-like meeting-house as the stern old divine adjusted his gold-rimmed spectacles and, amid the hushed expectancy, addressed more particularly the bereaved father and mother, brother and sisters and the bride-to-have-been. In concluding his eulogy, he stated that Professor Fisher had filled "next to the highest

<sup>1</sup>This portrait still hangs at Yale in the President's Room, Memorial Hall.

office in Yale College, and in that department he shone with pre-eminent lustre. . . . In Mathematics and Astronomy he left no superior and perhaps no equal of his years either in America or Great Britain." He then went on to say that there was "ground to hope that he had experienced a saving change" before the end. Here again Catharine and the sorrowing family must derive what faint comfort they might, from that feeble word "hope." Probably indeed, it was only as the result of a struggle between the old minister's tender heart and his relentless doctrines, that even that slender comfort was held out to them. "God may and certainly will, do more good by his sudden and unexpected and alarming death," he continued, "than he could have done by his life. They know not to how many his death may be sanctified. It may have a happy effect upon a very sensible and highly polished person who may imagine she has the largest share of sorrow in this instance of mortality. . . ." One can well imagine how very far from happy the "very sensible and highly polished person" then looked to the scores of solemn eyes which were turned upon her! "God has answered all his benevolent purposes by his death, and *all is well*," declared Doctor Emmons in conclusion. "So let the afflicted father and mother, brother and sisters believe and feel and say, and all will be well with them. Amen."

Some months later, while still with the Fishers, Catharine wrote her friend, Louisa Wait:

"Oh, Louisa, those days of bitterness I cannot forget, nor can I give you any adequate idea of what they were; but your feeling heart can in some measure imagine what were my feelings when first introduced to scenes so calculated to renew and aggravate grief. There were his bereaved parents who had lost their hope and comfort, his brother and sisters whom he had guided in the path of knowledge with affectionate and unwearied care. His instrument, his portrait, his letters and books, and the me-

morials of his early genius preserved by maternal love and above all the renewed testimonials of his tender care and affection for me, so that many times when I contemplated all his bright hopes, forever blasted, the loss of mourning family and my own sad heart, I could not but feel and say ‘was ever sorrow like to my sorrow?’ ”

She enclosed these lines which she had written for the monument which his father had erected to his memory, in Franklin:

“Thy grave, O Fisher, is the rolling flood  
Thy urn, the rock reared by God!  
Yet near thy home raised by affection’s hand  
To speak thy name, this simple stone shall stand  
How dark the scene, till Faith directs on high  
Beyond those orbs that charmed thy youthful eye  
There now thy noble mind expanding glows  
In flood of light nor pain nor darkness knows  
Youth, Genius, Knowledge, Virtue past away  
From Earth’s dim shores to Heaven’s eternal day!”

Her brother Edward, fearing the effects of her long absorption in her grief, wrote her:

“The mind cannot bear intense application to any one subject for a long time, without interruption, nor will the body without much care, bear it. I would advise you therefore to take *much exercise*. And not to think on the subject of religion at *all times* but to have some other employments for your mind as a relief. I would not have you read anything of a metaphysical kind. . . . You might perhaps read parts of President Dwight’s travels or accounts of missionary exertions or reports of bible and other societies and other things of like kind. . . .”

Evidently light reading one hundred years ago!

No one with a mind as powerful as Catharine’s could pass through this fiery ordeal without being profoundly influenced

intellectually as well as emotionally. She could not bring herself to believe that her blameless lover had been consigned for eternity to the fires of Hell and yet she could not find any assurance that he had had the experiences essential to salvation according to the doctrines of her hereditary faith. After going around and around in this treadmill of despair, until she felt alarmed for her sanity, she finally decided that "there is a terrible mistake somewhere," that she would try no longer to solve the enigma, but would devote the remainder of her life to "doing good." In casting about for a sphere of usefulness, she was forced to select teaching, because it was at that time practically the only profession open to women. Consequently, she became a teacher, but before describing her teaching career, I would mention some of the results of her intense religious thought, induced by her tragedy, both upon herself and others.

While she nominally subjected herself to the religious beliefs of her father, it was of course impossible for her, with her strong and intensely active mind, to abide by her resolution to leave the enigma alone. Instead she constantly wrestled with it, with results alarmingly unsettling to her own orthodoxy, that of her family, and eventually to the orthodoxy of the public of her time. She first published in 1836 her views on religion in book form in *Letters on the Difficulties of Religion*.

In this book she aroused the watch-dogs of orthodoxy by asserting that "any man who sincerely and habitually loves his Maker, so as to make it the chief object and effort to discover his will and obey it, will secure eternal happiness." The orthodox *Princeton Review* commented, "We do not believe that all Protestants will be contented to have all fundamental articles of religion reduced to this one." Also they took exception to her statement that the disputes between Christians "relate to things not essential to salvation."

"According to her theory," continued the outraged reviewer, "it is our own inherent righteousness or moral goodness by which we are rendered acceptable to God, and not by the merit or righteousness of Christ, which is never once mentioned or referred to. . . . Now if this pious character alone is requisite for our salvation, the mission and sacrifice of Christ, were totally unnecessary. This is surely 'another gospel,' and completely subversive of the gospel of Christ." Of course, the reviewer was right. It was another gospel. The first-born of Roxana Foote had inherited the "natural goodness" heresy which zealous young Lyman Beecher had tried so hard but so unavailingly to extirpate in the mother.

But Catharine's crowning heresy was the assertion, "I am sure God does not require anything of us but what we have *full ability* to perform." The reviewer's comment on this was, "that that cannot be admitted as an intuitive, self-evident truth is manifest from the fact that there always have been multitudes who utterly deny the truth of the position." And finally, in reference to the doctrinal requirement that we should love God supremely, Catharine claimed that "the control of our emotions is within our power and though we cannot control them by direct volition, as men control the movement of their limbs, we have an indirect control that is as efficient. . . ." In this, Catharine was refuting the great Jonathan Edwards in his celebrated treatise on the freedom of the will. About a year after the appearance of this book, Catharine's brother-in-law, Professor Calvin Ellis Stowe, was in Germany, buying books for Lane Theological Seminary, when he told an eminent German theologian that his sister-in-law, Catharine Beecher, had written the ablest refutation of Edwards on the will. "Vat a woman," exclaimed the German, as he threw up his hands, "refute Edwards on de vill! God forgive Christopher Columbus for discovering such a country!"

This was long before the psychologists had presented us with complexes, fixed ideas and subconsciousnesses, but the states of mind, if not the names, were in existence. It is plain that Catharine had a fixed idea, that the "plan of salvation" must be so modified as to give her a definite assurance, in place of a vague hope, that her lover was enjoying the felicities of the saved in Heaven instead of the tortures of the lost in Hell.

These views she elaborated in 1857, in *Common Sense Applied to Religion or The Bible and the People*, and in *The Religious Training of Children in the School, the Family, and the Church*, in 1864.<sup>2</sup>

But the lid was off Pandora's box and the mischief done, as soon as the first book became popular. Neither the Beechers, nor any thinking persons, could thereafter rest as quietly as previously, at their Calvinistic moorings. Although Lyman Beecher's heresy trial began just before Catharine's religious views were first published, she had of course been discussing them with him for years, and they unquestionably strengthened his so-called heresies and presumably precipitated his trial—that trial toward which the first impetus had been given by Catharine's mother, Roxana Foote, and which had received its second impulse from her stepmother, Harriet Porter, and which Catharine herself, finally helped to precipitate. Although no one could have seemed freer from petticoat domination than the virile Lyman Beecher, such was the influence of the women of his family upon his beliefs. Her tragedy and her resulting views undoubtedly played a part in leading her brother Edward, years later, to write his book, *The Conflict of Ages*, which was credited with having done more to undermine the doctrines of Calvinism than any book published up to that time.

In *The Conflict of Ages* Edward sought to get around the difficulties inherent in the doctrine of "original sin," by claim-

<sup>2</sup> For Catharine Beecher's bibliography see pp. 410 and 411.

ing that what is wrong in the mind of man "is caused by its wrong action in a pre-existent state for which the Creator is not accountable."

This ingenious attempt "to beat the devil around a stump" didn't help Edward to silence his irrepressible sister. Instead she wrote him this challenging, not to say embarrassing, letter:

"I reply how do you get this?

"If you say by a Revelation from God, I say before I can confide in his teachings I must have *proof* that all this horrible misery and wrong resulting from the wrong construction or nature of mind is not attributable to the Creator of All Things. His mere word is nothing from the Author of a system which is all ruined and worse than good for nothing. He must clear his character before he can offer me a Revelation!"

Not an easy letter to answer in 1857! When Catharine herself came to the difficulties of the doctrine of "original sin" or "total depravity," as she did in her book on the *Religious Training of Children*, she made short work of it by denying it outright. She said that not only was human nature not totally depraved, but the exact opposite was the case. "The infant mind," she claimed, "is the creation of God and we impeach his wisdom or goodness when we deny that it is rightly constructed. To suppose that new-created minds are brought into being corrupt and sinful and incapable of obedience, and yet responsible and guilty for disobedience, is to represent the Divine character in such light that no child can love him nor is even bound to love him. Sin arises not from depraved nature but from depraved action, and there is no sin previous to voluntary transgression." Vindicating the natural ability and free agency of man, she made "a controlling purpose of obedience" manifested in good works, and an unselfish life, the con-

dition of salvation. In short, in order to be saved one must lead the kind of life which Professor Fisher had led.

Catharine's tragedy led her sister Harriet to write one of her two best books, *The Minister's Wooing*—the other being *Old Town Folks*. In fact, *The Minister's Wooing* is merely a fictionized account with a happy ending of Catharine's romance and tragedy. The minister, Doctor Hopkins, is Doctor Emmons; the sailor lover, James Marvyn, is Professor Fisher; and the mother, Mrs. Marvyn, is Mrs. Fisher. And Candace, the Negro mammy, expresses the views of Mrs. Stowe herself on theology and religion, and those views she largely derived from her elder sister, Catharine.

The Beechers had by this time come to be regarded by the rigidly orthodox as a thoroughly dangerous group, against whose pernicious influence all Christians should be warned. A pamphlet entitled *The New Apostacy*, published in 1860, attacked Lyman Beecher and Henry Ward. The author compared Henry Ward to the Dragon of the Apocalypse, the tail of which drew a third of the stars after it.

Catharine sent Henry this pamphlet with these comments:

"Dear Brother Dragon,

"That monstrous tail of yours which seems to be drawing 'a third part of the stars after you' is a great inconvenience to me and I wish you would keep it out of my way.

"It seems by the valuable work sent herewith that you 'are sent of God to gather the *tares*' planted by your father who it appears is 'the great head and sample of the Laodicean heresy.'

"This same tail of yours it seems is attracting 'all except those who are rooted and grounded in the truth.' . . .

"Meantime you 'curl the lip of scorn at the doctrine of *total depravity*' and 'command the sympathies of all who repel the humbling doctrines of the Cross.'

"You have 'swept away' with that hideous brush of yours nearly every fundamental doctrine. And all this you have done when 'you are the merest child for investigating and enforcing truth.' You are mainly intent on dislodging the doctrines of the Cross. You are full 'charged with opposition to the vital truths of Christianity.' . . . Meantime all attached to you are in heart 'opposed to the truth as it is in Jesus.'

"Having collected all this in your train no wonder you make a considerable flourish among the stars!

"But I wish you to understand, Brother Dragon, that I myself have been calculating to make a few gyrations in sweeping stars and other such little matters and I am disturbed in feeling that this vast brush of yours gives me but small chance. Do be a little generous and leave me more space in the Celestial Zodiac.

"I am sure our father meant to *entail* some of his 'tares' to me as well as to you, and if I am not quite your equal in a terminal appendage, I am 'yours to serve' 'sed non tali auxilio.' . . . ."

This bit of fooling is typical of the kind of amusement which the theological enemies of the Beechers unwittingly furnished them.

Catharine's brothers devoted their lives to preaching that "other gospel" which she was the first member of the family to adopt and formulate. Therefore, it may be said that Catharine Beecher's influence upon the religious thought of her time was not merely her personal influence, but was also the collective influence of her three sisters and her seven preacher brothers. In a sense, it may further be said that this influence was set in motion by the tragic death of her brilliant young lover. All of which gives an ironically prophetic quality to the words of old Doctor Emmons when he said in his sermon on Professor Fisher, "God may and certainly will do more good by his sudden and unexpected and alarming death than he could have done by his life."

It is certain that this young man, brilliant though he was, had he lived and married Catharine Beecher, could have exerted no such influence, as he did through his death, upon the Beecher family, and through them upon the religious thought of the nation.

## CHAPTER VI

### CATHARINE BEECHER

#### A CENTURY AGO MODERN SCHOOL

ON HER return to Litchfield after visiting her lost lover's family, Catharine Beecher decided that her best chance "to do good," as recommended by her brother Edward, lay in the field of teaching—more particularly in securing more and better educational opportunities for her sex. She began to plan how and where to begin.

"As to my future employment, I wish to consult you," she said in a letter to her father, written in February, 1823. "Generally speaking, there seems to be no very extensive sphere of usefulness for a single woman but that which can be found in the limits of a school-room; but there have been instances in which women of superior mind and acquirements have risen to a more enlarged and comprehensive boundary of exertion. . . . [Catharine probably had chiefly in mind Emma Willard and her school for "young ladies" founded in Troy, New York, about two years before.]

"When I was in Hartford, Mr. Hawes [the minister of the Centre Church] lamented the want of a good female school. This and your advice have led me to wish to commence one there.

"I might take the general superintendence, and have considerable time for improvement, and secure the benefit of Edward's assistance while he retains his school there."

Her brother, Edward, was then conducting the Hartford Grammar School, which later became the Hartford Public High School.

The next month her father replied from Hartford:

"I came here Tuesday evening, and began my inquiries about opening a school; and, have been pushing them as fast as such matters can be pushed until now. The point is, I think, well settled that such a school is greatly needed and that scholars enough can be obtained to justify opening. It will not, however, answer for you to engage in it listlessly, expecting yourself to superintend and do a little and have the weight of the school come on others. I should be ashamed to have you open and keep only a commonplace, middling sort of school. It is expected to be of a higher order; and, unless you are willing to put your talents and strength into it, it would be best not to begin. . . ."

Shortly after this, and less than a year after the tragedy, the Hartford papers informed the citizens, according to Mae Elizabeth Harveson in *Catharine Esther Beecher; Pioneer Educator*, that "the Misses C. and M. Beecher will open in this place a school intended exclusively for those who wish to pursue the higher branches of female education."

The school was opened on Main Street over a harness store at the sign of the White Horse. It was a busy spot with stage-coaches frequently clattering by to stop at the near-by Ripley's Coffee House, for Hartford was on the Boston to New York stage route.

According to Miss Harveson, the "young ladies" might in their free time go shopping in the "Ladies Fashionable Shoe Store" or buy a new "Leg-horn Hat, or Gypsey" in Sarah Week's store, or patronize the rival shop of Sally Hoff near the Court-House. Or if on amusement bent they might attend "the concert of the Jubal Society at the Episcopal Church," where "the performance will consist of Anthems, Choruses, Duets and Solos. The order of which may be had with tickets." Or if inclined to improve their minds, they could attend the Hartford Museum of Curiosities and Paintings with its "Ninety Portraits, Natural Curiosities, etc." Or they might

sit in their rooms and read in the local paper—*The Times and Hartford Advertiser*—of “Horrid Transactions,” “Remarkable Occurrences,” “Wonderful Escapes,” “Melancholy Shipwrecks” or “Most Distressing Intelligence.”

Judging from this letter, which Catharine wrote a month later to her friend, Louisa Wait, she and her sister had little time for these metropolitan excitements.

“We [Catharine and Mary] have established a system of classification and mutual instruction so that we are confined only half a day. I attend in the morning and hear the recitations in Rhetoric, Logic, Natural and Moral Philosophy, Chemistry, History and Latin, and instruct a class in Algebra. . . . Mary attends in the afternoon—hears the remaining recitations and instructs in drawing. We require all the scholars to write a composition once a fortnight. . . . Mary and I are now busily engaged in studying Botany and making a collection of plants, which together with studying Latin and taking care of the school, keeps my time from hanging heavy on my hands.”

All Catharine knew of Latin had been taught her during the fortnight before the school opened by her brother, Edward, and under his coaching she kept two jumps ahead of her class. It would seem that she had heeded her father’s warning, and was not engaging “listlessly” in her new duties.

Catharine Beecher said of her teaching of Moral Philosophy that she started to teach it with no particular knowledge of it or interest in it, but:

“Soon I became deeply interested in this study; for I had been led to my profession by most profound and agitating fears of dangers in the life to come, not only for myself but for a dear friend, who, according to the views in which I had been trained, had died unprepared. ‘What are we to do to be saved?’ became my agonizing inquiry for myself and all I loved most. I read Locke, Reid,

Stewart, Brown and went to those who read Greek and German for the views of Aristotle and Kant. Gained much relief in religion as well as culture."<sup>1</sup>

These studies and her dissatisfaction with the existing textbooks on the subject called forth *Elements of Mental and Moral Philosophy* which she issued privately and cautiously in 1831. This book contained her heretical plan of salvation, employing as it did that theologically suspicious quality "natural goodness." These heretical views, expressed so early in her career and so stoutly adhered to, probably had much to do with her life-long failure to raise endowments. The largest money chests were, in those days, chiefly controlled by the strictly orthodox. So her tragedy promptly and permanently influenced her career as an educator as well as her work as a religious leader.

The school twice within three years outgrew its quarters and was finally moved to a large basement room of a church. The number of pupils increased to between seventy and eighty.

In her book, *True Remedy for the Wrongs of Women*, Catharine described a typical day of the teachers in this noisy, crowded basement room:

"Upon entering the school they commenced in the first place the business of keeping in order and quietness an assembly of youth, full of life and spirits, and many of them ready to evade every rule, were not the eye of authority continually upon the watch. To this distracting employment (enough sometimes to occupy a dozen minds) was added the labour of hearing a succession of classes at the rate of one for every eight, ten, or fifteen minutes. In attending to this, no time could be allowed to explain or illustrate. The teacher must endeavour to discover as quick as possible if the pupil could repeat a certain set of words; if so, nothing more could be expected; if not,

<sup>1</sup>"The Hartford Female Seminary and Its Founder," by Henry Barnard, in *The American Journal of Education* of 1878.

some extra stimulus, in the form of reproof or inducement, must be applied, and then all that the teacher could do was accomplished; the next class must come, and thus through the day.

"By the time the duties of the day were over, the care of governing, the vexations of irregularities and mischief, the labour of hearing such a number and variety of lessons, and the sickness of heart occasioned by feeling that nothing was done well, were sufficient to exhaust the animal strength and spirits, and nothing more could be attempted till the next day rose to witness the same round of duties."

One may well imagine what a relief it was to Catharine to escape during her vacations from this tread-mill of noise and confusion to her father's home amid the peaceful hills of Litchfield. At such a time she wrote Edward: "You cannot imagine how much I enjoy this visit at home. You know how happy it makes us to be with father. His society seems always to give a new impulse to the affections of the heart and to every intellectual power." And of her father's preaching she wrote: "The fact is, I never hear anybody preach that makes me feel as father does; perhaps it may be because he is father. But I can not hear him without its making my face burn and my heart beat."

After four years of this disheartening grind, Catharine Beecher formulated a protest, published in *The American Journal of Education* in 1827, under the title "Female Education." In this article she asserted that "the education of females has generally been irregular, superficial and deficient. A great part of the knowledge acquired in school is merely mechanical—learned by rote, without any correct ideas attached to the words repeated." And she concluded by forecasting in these words a happier day:

" . . . eventually the time will come, when it will be deemed necessary to establish endowed institutions for fe-

males, where a regular course of study is demanded—regular periods of entering and leaving established [It appears 'the young ladies' had the habit of popping in and out of schools as their fancy prompted]—a proper division of labor effected, and suitable facilities and accommodations provided for instructors; and it is believed that the sooner a community becomes convinced of this and practices upon it, the sooner will it extensively experience the happiness and beneficial influence which refined and well educated women confer on society."

In referring in her *Educational Reminiscences and Suggestions* to these early days of her school, she said: "The only pleasant recollection is that of my own careful and exact training under most accurate and faithful brother Edward, and my reproduction of it to my sister Harriet and two others of my brightest pupils."

In order to bring to pass in Hartford the millennial condition which she had pictured in concluding her article, she drew plans for a commodious and properly arranged school building. These plans she laid before those whom she called the "city fathers," evidently meaning the leading men of the city, rather than merely the officers of the government, and these worthies, or many of them, laughed at them as being preposterously ambitious and unprecedented. She then went to their wives and promptly secured their approval and backing. "This was my first experience," she commented, "of the moral power and good judgment of American women, which has been my chief reliance ever since." At length the school was incorporated, enough stock sold to finance the enterprise, and the building erected.

In November, 1827, the local newspaper announced that "Excellent and convenient accommodations are prepared in the building lately erected for the Institution." And later Miss Beecher herself described these accommodations as: ". . . one large hall, where the pupils assemble for all the

general exercises of the school, and where they are expected to study when not engaged in other school duties. Besides this, there are ten other rooms employed for the other purposes of instruction, such as a library, Lecture Rooms and Recitation Rooms. . . . Eight teachers are employed, and to each one, the care of not more than one or two branches is committed."

Under these favorable conditions was founded a school which, with the usual ups and downs of fortune, was to continue for sixty-one years. During its first four and most prosperous years, Catharine Beecher herself conducted it and introduced perhaps as many innovations in educational methods, which have since won the endorsement of acceptance in the best educational practise, as have ever been introduced in a like period into any school.

She impressed upon her teachers that the purpose of education was primarily the formation of character and only incidentally the imparting of information. ". . . place moral and religious training where it ought to be placed, and that is first, . . ." said she.

She felt she was saving souls through education, just as Lyman Beecher felt he was saving them through revivals. Both believed they were doing God's work under His personal direction, and doing it not only for this life, but for eternity. Catharine Beecher was an educational evangelist.

Of first importance "is the influence of excited interest to gain some *practical good* in quickening intellectual vigor and in securing accurate perceptions and consequent long retention of memory." In this she was harking back to her own experience in equipping herself in eighteen months for teaching when she was seeking the "*practical good*" of helping her family by becoming self-supporting.

"It should not be so much the object of the teacher during the recitation hour to find out how much has been learned as to communicate knowledge by explanation and illustration."

Is not this the conception of the recitation hour in some of our most modern and progressive schools and colleges to-day?

Classes should be small and should be composed of those who are approximately equal in ability and acquirements so that none shall be either hurried forward or retarded because of others.

General principles should be stressed in teaching a subject and details avoided. If the principles are once mastered the details can be acquired later if and as needed.

Kindred and connected branches of study should be associated. Lessons in geography and history should be associated with similar periods in literature. Exercises in English composition should be similarly associated with history and other subjects.

The interest of the pupils should be excited to discover new and other methods than those set forth in the text-books.

It was found practical to remedy defects of mind, body and habits, and the conviction was emphatically expressed that to do this should be a chief aim of all education in order to secure a well balanced mind in a healthy body.

"The attempt to remedy physical defects came about in this manner," said Miss Beecher in her *Educational Reminiscences*. "An English lady of fine person and manner came to us as a teacher of what then had no name, but now would be called Calisthenics. She gave a large number of the exercises that are in my work on 'Physiology and Calisthenics.' . . . From this came the system of Calisthenics which I invented, which spread all over the country." These exercises included a series which were done to music like Walter Camp's *Daily Dozen*.

"Still more interesting," continued Miss Beecher, "were some of our attempts in remedying intellectual defects. For example, our best mathematical teacher came with the case of a bright pupil who could not be made to un-

derstand the reasoning process in demonstrating a proposition in Euclid. She had a quick memory . . . so as to repeat the exercise as a mere effort of memory. I took the case myself, and at first was convinced of an entire lacking of some mental power. But perseverance conquered, and, as soon as she understood the process, she was delighted with her lessons and eventually became one of my best teachers in mathematics."

The teachers were expected to mingle with the students in their amusements as well as their studies, and in this the student-teachers were found particularly helpful. These student-teachers had been evolved merely as a means of assisting overburdened teachers, but the method was found so developing to the student-teachers themselves, that it was continued even when not needed for its original purpose. Catharine's sister, Harriet, at the age of twelve started as a student, became a student-teacher, then a teacher, and eventually the best teacher of English composition that the school ever had. One feature of the school was a reception which Miss Beecher gave every week for her students, their parents and friends. These affairs became one of the social institutions of Hartford.

There were frequent teachers' meetings at which were discussed the individual needs of each pupil, and each was assigned to the special guidance of the teacher most likely to be helpful to her.

This was a modest precursor of the tutorial system which is working so well at Harvard to-day, and which is being developed under another name at Yale.

All espionage was discountenanced.

The giving of prizes was discarded as a means of stimulating effort and for it were substituted higher appeals, such as an aroused desire to be of service to the teachers and school.

In spite of conscientious devotion to outdoor exercise and the taking of adequate time for sleep and meals, Catharine Beecher was finally threatened with a nervous breakdown. She

was under the constant strain of work and responsibility involved in teaching, supervising the teachings of others, selecting text-books, even preparing text-books in arithmetic, physiology and moral philosophy because those available she found inadequate, mapping out courses of study, conferring with students and parents, and conducting the business of an institution which soon came to have well over one hundred students.

Her exercise consisted in horseback rides before breakfast, accompanied by some of her teachers and students. She and Harriet rode horses known as "Music" and "Dancing" until Catharine bought her "Rollo" of whom she said in an essay on "Chivalry of Horses," in *Godey's Lady's Book*, "My beautiful Rollo . . . who, if there be a land where the spirits of thy race depart, art coursing its bright fields—the fleetest, the noblest and the best."

At this time, 1829, the state of Georgia tried to drive out the Cherokee Indians by methods which the Beechers regarded as "cruel and unjust." So the overburdened young school-mistress, on the verge of a nervous breakdown, clinched matters for herself by rushing to the defense of the Indians. She prepared a petition addressed to the "Benevolent Women of the United States," which was published anonymously, and organized public meetings to send petitions to Congress. This was the first instance of what became almost a Beecher habit—the issuing of public declarations. When Professor Benjamin Silliman of Yale read this anonymous petition, he pronounced it worthy of the elder Pitt. That amused Harriet, who dubbed Catharine "old Mrs. Pitt."

While these activities failed to prevent the eviction of the Indians from their reservations in Georgia, they were effective in forcing Catharine Beecher to leave her school for an indefinite rest. She had now developed to the full that passion for not minding her own business which characterized the Beecher family. Of course, whether you mind your own business or not depends on your definition of what your business is. The

Beechers regarded as their business anything which advanced the welfare of mankind. According to their definition, they did mind their own business. To their admirers they were noble humanitarians. To their enemies they were conceited and high-handed meddlers.

"Before my departure," said Miss Beecher, "I arranged with my teachers that during my absence the school should be resolved into a sort of republic and attempt self-government at least for a short experiment. . . ."

So far as known, this was the first attempt to apply in this country the principles of student self-government, or what is more properly known as student cooperation in school government—a principle which is now so nearly universal in schools of the better sort.

That it was successful, would seem to be indicated by this letter which Harriet Beecher wrote her sister, after she had been absent several months:

"This evening I met with my circle and the conversation gave me much pleasure. . . . Poor children! They seemed to feel as if the weight of the nation were on them. Mary Ely's laughing visage was drawn into an expression of judgemetal gravity, Clarissa looked seriously concerned, and Ann Terry talked feelingly of their heavy responsibilities. They proposed several plans which they thought would conduce to the regularity of the school."

Another teacher added this postscript:

"Dear Miss Beecher:

"I wish to say one word as to the prosperity of our Republic. . . . Since I have been in the school I have never seen the young ladies so exactly what they should be as to-day.

"C. MUNGER."

At the request of her trustees, she prepared before leaving, for the guidance of her successors, a small book called *Suggestions on Education* which set forth her theories and practices. This book was widely read and commented upon both in this country and in Europe. The school had become one of the three most famous schools for girls in this country—the other two being Emma Willard's school in Troy, New York, and Zilaph P. Grant's at Ipswich, Massachusetts. Indeed Miss Beecher tried unsuccessfully to secure Miss Grant as her successor. She also tried to get Mary Lyon who, a few years later, founded Mount Holyoke. She finally turned the school over to John P. Brace, a nephew and associate of Miss Sarah Pierce of the Litchfield school which Catharine and her sisters had attended. He was a remarkable teacher, conducted the school for the next thirteen years, and was the most successful of Miss Beecher's successors.

But quite as important as a successor was an endowment. Her experience had convinced her that no one person could carry all the work and responsibility of being both the educational and the business head of a large school. She had come to believe that schools, like colleges, must be endowed.

"The distinctive feature of a college is endowments," she wrote, "which secures a faculty of co-equal teachers and such a division of labor that as the aim and general rule, each professor is responsible for instructing only one or two classes only one or two hours a day in only one or two departments. For this he secures a home, a salary to support a family, and an honorable profession for life. In every college thus endowed, the whole responsibility of government rests, not on an individual, but upon the whole faculty who decide everything by a majority vote. Then, the corporation take certain responsibilities, the finances are managed by a treasurer . . . so that the faculty are relieved from all these cares."

Armed with her *Suggestions for Education* and the fame of her school, she started to raise an endowment which should put it on this basis and so insure its permanent success. Although her modest aim was the apparently inadequate sum of twenty thousand dollars she failed to raise it. The immediate cause of the failure was said to be that a fund was being raised at the same time for Washington College, now Trinity College, and the educational needs of the stronger sex made a more compelling appeal to the "city fathers." Probably also the orthodoxy of most of the well-to-do and Miss Beecher's lack of it, played their part in this money-raising failure as in many such attempts later. According to Calvinistic doctrines, no amount of education would help to save one's soul without conversion, and what was the use of educating lost souls who were merely tarrying briefly on this earth before their descent into Hell for eternity? To hard-headed Calvinists, that looked like a waste of money.

Then, too, in this, the heyday of violent sectarianism, Catharine Beecher would not allow any school of hers to be affiliated with any one religious sect. Time and time again, she was offered financial support if she would associate her school with some one denomination. But she always refused, holding that while Christianity was essential to proper education, sectarianism was both irrelevant and injurious.

Twenty thousand dollars was ever after to be to Catharine Beecher the pot of gold just beyond the rainbow, which was to solve all her financial difficulties. Perhaps in a sense, it was fortunate that she never caught up with her twenty thousand dollars, for even the elastic dollars of one hundred years ago could hardly have met a fraction of the demands that she would have made upon them!

Broken in health, and no better off in pocket for her grueling and successful work, because she had poured back into the school, in the form of improved facilities and better teachers, all she had made, she left her losing fight for an endowment,

to join her father in his vast projects for the salvation of the West. She determined that while her father saved the West through revivals, she would save it through schools.

Some years later, in an address to a graduating class of the Normal School of West Newton, Massachusetts, she thus described her nervous breakdown at this time:

"I thought if I exercised two hours a day and took eight hours of quiet sleep, and a proper time for meals, I might then work all the rest of the time without danger. And so I kept my mind under the pressure of responsibility and mental effort for ten successive years. At the end of that time, without a day's warning of danger, I found the entire fountain of nervous energy exhausted. I could not read a page or write a line, or even listen to conversation without distress. The evil was irretrievable, and I never again could assume the duties that wore me down, nor employ a tenth part of the time and faculties that could be profitably employed if full health were restored.

"I know of no comfort in this loss but the hope that my example may save others, engaged in the same efforts, from similar suffering and loss. . . . I certainly never felt more perfectly healthful in mind than the week before an utter and irretrievable prostration. You must make up your minds that you not only will secure the requisite hours for sleep, and two hours exercise in the open air, but an hour or two every day in which you will have nothing to do but rest and amuse yourselves."

Here was a typical Beecher reaction. They always rationalized their misfortunes and tried to capitalize them for the benefit of others. It is important to remember that whatever Catharine Beecher accomplished during the remaining forty-five years of her life was the work of a semi-invalid.

## CHAPTER VII

### CATHARINE BEECHER

#### SAVING THE NATION THROUGH SCHOOLS

No sooner were the Beechers settled at Walnut Hills, Cincinnati, than some of the leading citizens urged Catharine Beecher to found there a school such as she had established in Hartford. She explained that she could not, because of her health, but they were so insistent and she so in sympathy with the project, that she finally agreed that she would try to get a group of her former teachers to undertake it under her general supervision. Accordingly, she wrote to Mary Dutton, one of her best teachers, and after explaining that neither she nor Harriet had the strength to assume the burden of founding a school, continued:

“*Yet we must have a school here* such as we would ourselves establish if we had health, and you and some of the other H. F. Seminary teachers must come and commence the undertaking. [This would seem to have been rather hard on her successor, Mr. Brace.] There never was a better opening or a greater demand for such a school. . . .

“The pious people here feel their wants and yet for lack of a better, they send to a lady who writes tragedies for the theatre, and takes her pupils to see them acted. In many respects this school is a good one, and the lady an excellent teacher, but the single fact above shows that in all the most essential interests of education her school is entirely deficient. . . .

“Now if you and one other teacher would come on here and begin at first *on a small scale*, Harriet and I would both help in various ways. I should love to come and preach and sometimes to teach, and Harriet would like

the same, and if we assumed no obligation or responsibility we could do it without feeling burdened. . . .”

“The plan is to start a school of the first rate order,” she added in a later letter, “which shall serve as a model to the West and which shall gradually grow into a large institution as its conductors gain experience and public confidence. My wish is to have the thing so managed in the *commencement* that the care and responsibility of the institution shall never rest upon any *one* person but be divided among several as is the case in colleges.”

Again she urged Mary Dutton, who was evidently wavering between her disinclination to indulge in an untried venture in the then far West and her instinct to respond to the urgency of her dominant leader:

“If I can find four or five such ladies who will agree to devote three years of their lives to effecting this object, I feel no doubt the thing can be done and the plan perpetuated. In three years we could train *principals* and *teachers* to go forth and establish similar institutions all over our country.

“I see no other way in which our country can so surely be saved from the inroads of vice, infidelity and error. Let the leading females of this country become refined, well educated and active, and the salt is scattered through the land to purify and save.

“After the first year, if we succeed in the plan, it will probably be the means of securing a permanent and somewhat lucrative situation for all the ladies engaged, probably all expenses for board, washing, fuel and lights cleared, and \$250 per annum as a regular income. . . .”<sup>1</sup>

Here the educational evangelist characteristically combined the allurements of two hundred and fifty dollars annually over and above living expenses, with those of saving the nation! These letters show the combination of shrewdness and naïveté

<sup>1</sup>These letters are in the Yale University Library.

which was so characteristic, not only of Catharine Beecher, but of the whole family. Mary Dutton and the other "ladies" somewhat reluctantly yielded to their leader's urgency. The school was started under the name of the Western Female Seminary. The entire responsibility, educational and financial, immediately fell exactly where it would inevitably fall and exactly where Catharine had so ardently planned that it should not fall—on her own shoulders. She had now in her feeble health, instead of furnishing herself with exhilarating opportunities for a little irresponsible preaching and teaching, saddled upon herself just such a school as had broken her health in Hartford—plus the added ambitious project of furnishing principals and teachers "to go forth and establish similar institutions all over our country." Apparently the feebler her health, the more soaringly ambitious became her plans! Never again was she to be content to direct the destinies of a single school—nothing short of a chain of institutions, with which to save the nation, would satisfy her ambition. And always she planned with complete lack of success, to have others assume the responsibility for these vast projects, so that she could both husband her frail health and indulge her passion for preaching and writing.

Again she set out with her usual optimism to raise that familiar twenty thousand dollars which, like Aladdin's lamp, was to materialize her dreams. She issued an appeal to the citizens of Cincinnati, she arranged public meetings before which men of light and leading read speeches prepared for them or suggested to them by Catharine Beecher. She could not speak personally at public meetings for fear that some prospective donors might take offense at such unladylike behavior. She secured the appointment of a committee of "city fathers" to raise the fund, and leased suitable accommodations for the school. No "city father" would, however, shoulder the responsibility of actually taking the lead in raising the money.

The members of the headless committee, after a few not too

successful efforts, relapsed into the embrace of their absorbing private affairs. Apparently Catharine had not reached the point of confidence in her sex where she thought of entrusting to them matters so related to business as the raising of money.

These violent exertions did not produce an endowment either of twenty thousand dollars or of any considerable sum, but they did have disastrous effects upon Catharine Beecher's failing health. She decided to travel in the West for her health, and incidentally to make a survey of the educational needs of the Western States. Mary Dutton and her associate teachers were left to struggle along as best they could with the unendowed school. After a few years, in spite of frequent exhortations such as this from their absent leader: ". . . let me say to you . . . that we teachers are to work not for money, nor for influence, nor for honor, nor for ease, but with the simple single purpose of doing good . . ." they gave up the struggle, and their quarters were taken over by the Catholic Church for a nun's school. When one recalls that Lyman Beecher's main purpose in going with his children to Cincinnati was "to save the West for Protestantism" there was irony in that!

In her tour of the West, Catharine Beecher visited her friends and her friends' friends, and her friends' friends' friends. This she did, both because her means were meager and hotels expensive and because there was then thought to be a certain indelicacy in an unattached "female" stopping at a "public house." These loyal friends and friends' friends deserve the gratitude of all friends of education for their never failing hospitality to the, from then on, almost constant peripatetic guest—Catharine Beecher. While she was always interesting and frequently amusing, she must have been a great deal of a trial to her hosts. Her habit of command and her frayed nerves combined with her supreme confidence that her projects were the only means of saving humanity gradually gave her an almost pontifical assumption of authority.

Many years later Catharine Beecher went to visit her niece, Mrs. Edward Everett Hale, in Roxbury, Massachusetts. She was at the time writing alternately on one of the many versions of her famous book on housekeeping and on one of her theological works. She regarded her visit to her niece as a providential opportunity to do some experimentation on recipes in her niece's kitchen. Her niece's maids, instead of welcoming this opportunity for scientific guidance, resented it and obeyed her orders with increasing sullenness, until they revolted altogether. Whereupon Miss Beecher discharged them. When Doctor Hale came home, he found his wife and daughter getting the supper, as indeed they had to, since there was no one else to get it. Meanwhile "Aunt Catharine," having had her domestic-science experiments stopped by the revolt of the maids, was up-stairs in her room quietly writing on her theological book. Suddenly there came a knock on her door, and her nephew's loud voice of righteous indignation called, "Aunt Catharine, your visit is over! Pack up your things. A hack will call for you first thing in the morning!"

Some two years later, Catharine Beecher was seated on a bench on Boston Common, when Doctor Hale, walking by, caught sight of her. Embarrassed by the recollection that he had turned her out of his house, he tried to hurry on as though he had not noticed her, but she, seeing him, called out, "Edward, do come and see the wonderful books I have just bought at that second-hand store on Tremont Street." He joined her, looked at her treasures, and was so touched to find that she bore him no ill-will for having turned her out of his house, that he said, "Aunt Catharine, couldn't you arrange to come and pay us a visit right now?"

"Why, I should be delighted, Edward," she replied. He then summoned a herdic, an antediluvian Boston vehicle still in use in my boyhood, and they rattled over the cobblestones to his home in Roxbury, where "Aunt Catharine" stayed two weeks without a rift in family harmony.

But it may readily be imagined that the frequently unannounced arrival of Miss Beecher's battered little trunk at the house of prospective hosts awakened, to say the least, mixed emotions.

Now back to Catharine in the West. In her travels she discovered lamentable conditions. In many outlying districts what few schools there were, taught largely by desperate men driven, as a last resort, into this despised and wretchedly paid occupation, were worse than nothing. She estimated that over two million children were growing up without any schooling whatever. She determined that something must be done for these children who, through neglect, were being forced back into barbarism. She next went East and accompanied her friend, Mary Lyon, on a tour of the New England States when she was raising money for the founding of Mount Holyoke. In these states she found thousands of intelligent, well-educated, unmarried women who had no occupation. Thousands of others had the dubious one of helping in the housework as unwelcome, permanent guests in the homes of relatives, or even more dubious occupations in the newly established, but fast increasing factories, where they were obliged to work in bad air from five o'clock in the morning until seven-thirty in the evening, for wages of only twelve and a half to twenty cents a day. It became Catharine Beecher's passionate desire to enable these unemployed or ill-employed young women of New England to become the teachers of the two million untaught children of the West.

"I was invited to furnish an article to be read at the Annual Meeting of the National Lyceum," said Miss Beecher in her *Reminiscences*. This organization had been largely an outgrowth of the young men's associations, the organizing of which her father had initiated while in Boston. "I plead the causes of the two million children of our country without teachers and of the multitudes of educated Christian women

vainly seeking for schools. . . . I then began an attempt to organize women of all religious denominations to prosecute the preparation and employment of educated Christian women and their transfer from the East to act as teachers in the destitute sections of the West and South. At this period I prepared a volume entitled, *American Women: Will You Save Your Country?* It came out anonymously that it might not appear as from a mere individual. It was extensively circulated by the Harpers. . . . By this means was formed the Boston Ladies' Society for Promoting Education at the West, which by sending excellent teachers did a noble work for several years."

This appeal she supplemented by two others; one, an address called *The Evils Suffered by American Women and American Children: The Causes and Remedy*, and the other, *An Address to the Protestant Clergy of the United States*, which were published in book form by Harper Brothers. "The only difference between the obligations of Christians in the time of the Apostles and now is," said she in the latter, "that then they were required to lose all, and now we are required to use all for the same great cause." The address on the evils of women and children she delivered at meetings of "ladies" in Cincinnati, Washington, Baltimore, Philadelphia, New York and other cities. It was not unladylike, apparently, for a woman to speak in public provided there were no men present. Her brother-in-law, Professor Stowe, who had made for the state of Ohio a survey of the school systems of Europe, particularly Prussia, helped her by organizing a cooperating committee of the leading men of Cincinnati and the West generally.

But Catharine Beecher soon decided that the organization could not adequately accomplish its large purposes until a man of ability and distinction was secured to direct it, who would devote his entire time to it. She could not head it herself, because that would be "unladylike," and hence prejudicial to

the cause. Such a man could not be secured without the assurance of an adequate salary, and an adequate salary could not be raised until a suitable man had been secured. Miss Beecher seized both horns of this dilemma by undertaking simultaneously to raise the salary and secure the man. After unavailing efforts to draw into the work Henry Barnard, the great New England pioneer educator, she learned that Governor William Slade of Vermont had expressed a desire to help the cause. Accordingly, in November, 1845, she wrote from Walnut Hills, to Governor Slade:

"All that is now wanting to the full operation of this project is a *leader*. For this purpose a person is demanded of high character and position—a civilian rather than a clergyman—a man of liberal and philanthropic views who can take the energies and resources that will be put at his command—choose his own position—arrange his plans—and be in fact the leader and manager of the whole—assured of the ready co-operation and cheerful alacrity of all who seek to place him in this position—in carrying out his views.

"Such we are told is the gentleman whom I address. . . . We believe that the man who takes this position, and wisely employs the instrumentalities thus placed at his disposal, will prove as really the 'Father of His Country' as was Washington in a more suffering, but not more perilous day. . . .

"Permit us to say to our friends that you will take this situation as soon as your official term has expired, etc. . . ."

At the same time, she wrote to Henry Barnard and gave him a resumé of her own record and character for him to relay to Governor Slade, concluding:

"I wish this to be considered as *confidential*, and that it be destroyed when read. To any but a friend and one knowing the peculiarities of the case it would appear con-

ceited and egotistic. But Governor Slade's friends will not want to spare him, and they will say I am a scheming visionary woman—that I shall interfere and direct, etc., and what I want is a defence for the sake of the cause I serve.”<sup>2</sup>

Governor Slade decided to become the educational Father of His Country, in spite of the dangers of petticoat domination. So Miss Beecher and he divided the task between them. He undertook to tour the West and South, arrange to place teachers where needed, and organize local committees to welcome and establish them, while Miss Beecher recruited the prospective teachers and, after giving them in Hartford a few weeks of intensive preparation, shipped them West and South to the places designated. This procedure worked out smoothly for the first year or two, and then a difference of opinion developed between the Governor and Miss Beecher. She claimed that the voluntary committees were proving inadequate to their responsibilities and that properly qualified paid agents should accompany the teachers to their places of employment and see that the promised positions were actually given them. Also she felt that some emergency provision should be made for those who failed to secure or to retain the expected posts as also for those who, through sickness, were unable to perform their duties. These safeguards the Governor pronounced unnecessary, and had little difficulty in carrying the board of directors with him as naturally they were only too anxious to side-step the disagreeable necessity of raising additional funds. Undoubtedly, too, Miss Beecher's dictatorial manner had begun to rasp the Governor's masculine dignity.

Not long after this, Miss Beecher began to receive urgent and pathetic appeals for assistance from sick and stranded teachers. Since the Society would do nothing for them, she

<sup>2</sup>These letters are now in the possession of Dr. Will S. Munroe.

personally went to their rescue. She raised an emergency fund among the women in the cities of the East, to which she contributed three hundred dollars out of her own slender means, went to Burlington, Iowa, rented a house, sent for the dozen or so teachers who were ill or out of employment along the Mississippi, and cared for them until they were well and she had found schools for them. Taking advantage of this unauthorized activity on her part, Governor Slade reorganized the society as the National Board of Popular Education, with Catharine Beecher eliminated. Finding herself outside the breastworks of her own organization, she started without recriminations or vain regrets, to lay her plans for a new and larger educational movement which should have somewhat different objectives.

This ambitious project aimed at the establishment of a school, semi-collegiate in character, in every western state, with a faculty of co-equal teachers and with a normal department which should serve in emergencies also as a home for the graduates. Of course all this was long before the universal public school system of to-day. These schools should be situated in large towns or cities where there would be plenty of students available and plenty of homes in which those from out of town might board. The faculty and agents were to be women. She didn't propose any further to place herself and her work at the mercy of men.

She assigned to the support of the first agent, who inconsistently was a man, the royalties from her *Treatise on Domestic Economy* which had become "a best seller" of its day. In fact, most of her royalties went to the support of her work.

"*The Treatise on Domestic Economy* may be characterized as the first text-book in Home Economics," said Dr. Benjamin E. Andrews of Teachers' College, Columbia University, in 1912 in an issue of *The Journal of Home Economics*. . . . "There is in it something of the largeness of view and breadth of understanding which

makes the *Economicus* of Xenophon a book for all time. *The Domestic Economy*, in brief, is a classic."

In this book she asserted: "The proper education of a man decides the welfare of an individual; but educate a woman and the interests of a whole family are secured."

In *The True Remedy for the Wrongs of Women*, published a few years later, she developed her thesis that training children, nursing the sick and keeping house are the three branches of woman's profession for which, for the good of society, she needs, and should have, just as thorough training as men have for the law, medicine and preaching.

In order to raise money for her vast new schemes, Catharine Beecher made several extensive speaking tours, both in the East and the West, but, for fear of offending the prejudices of possible givers, she did not do the speaking. She took with her, her young half-brother, Thomas K. Beecher, to deliver the speeches which she prepared. This woman who had been ejected from her own organization by the man whom she placed at its head, was now preparing speeches for another man to deliver, in her efforts to found another organization!

Finally, after prolonged consultation with hosts of friends all over the country, Catharine Beecher founded in 1852 The American Woman's Educational Association. Its purpose, as stated in the papers of incorporation, was: "To aid in securing to American women a liberal education, honorable position and remunerative employment in their appropriate profession by means of endowed institutions on the college plan of organization; these institutions to include all that is gained by normal schools, and also to train women to be healthful, intelligent, and successful wives, mothers and house-keepers."

The year 1852 marked the climax of achievement in the Beecher family. Lyman Beecher published his *Views on Theology*; Edward his *Conflict of Ages*; Harriet her *Uncle Tom's*

*Cabin*; Henry Ward had made Plymouth pulpit a national institution, and Catharine founded the first national educational organization of women, by women and for women.

During its first few years of existence, this Association founded three schools, which measurably conformed to its ideals: one at Milwaukee, Wisconsin, another at Dubuque, Iowa, and a third at Quincy, Illinois. The last two flourished for a few years, languished for several more, and then died after the failure of efforts to secure that ever elusive twenty thousand dollars. But the Milwaukee institution did not die and is, after all these years, still in vigorous and useful existence under the name of the Milwaukee-Downer College and under the presidency of Lucia R. Briggs, a daughter of Dean Briggs of Harvard. An old resident of the city has just written me that Milwaukee is proud of this college which is the only living memorial of Catharine Beecher's half-century of work to improve the educational opportunities of her sex. While Catharine Beecher failed here, as always, to materialize that twenty-thousand-dollar mirage, the school after her death did obtain an endowment and thus, together with the failure of its unendowed sister institutions, gave a demonstration of the soundness of her claim, that unendowed schools could not become permanently successful.

But Catharine Beecher's relations with the trustees of this, her one permanently successful institution, were not always harmonious. She had the true pioneer's point of view about trustees. They existed exclusively to help her carry out her plans. When they disagreed with her plans, or conceived plans of their own with which she disagreed, they ceased, in her view, to be good trustees and became nuisances. In fact, she frankly said that she expected her trustees to understand her plans and support them because they believed in them or, in case they did not understand them, she expected them to support them just the same because they believed in her.

She was to have taken charge personally of the domestic-science house of the college in the 'sixties but did not because of a disagreement with the trustees. William W. Wight, the historian of the college, in *Annals of Milwaukee College* shrewdly commented on this difficulty:

"That Miss Beecher's plan was inflexible, unyielding, not pliant to the circumstances of local environment, that in some of its details it was impractical, even visionary, must be conceded; that she herself was often arbitrary, dictatorial, inconsiderate, under the pressure of her restless activity, cannot be doubted; but, barring these blemishes, one cannot repress an utterance of admiration for the nobility of her nature, the loftiness of her aims, the unselfishness of her disposition, her untiring devotion to a great cause, the persistent energy with which she met and thwarted obstacles. A character so majestic may well be the model, at this institution of her own creation, for those pupils who, still unborn when she planned and toiled, were yet the objects of her vigilant and fostering care."

There could hardly be a more plausible tribute! Also, it checks perfectly with what Dr. Andrew D. White told me of one of his encounters with Catharine Beecher. She appeared at his office one day when he was president of Cornell—she must have been over seventy at the time—and told him she had come to take a certain course for which she had long looked in vain but recently had found in his catalogue. With some embarrassment he commented, "I regret to say, Miss Beecher, that as yet, we have no courses open to women."

"Oh, that is quite all right, Doctor White, in fact I prefer to take it with men," she disarmingly replied.

That question seeming to be settled, Doctor White inquired whether he could be of service in finding her a place to lodge in town?

"No, thank you, Doctor White," she answered, "I shall room in——," mentioning one of the dormitories on the campus.

"But, Miss Beecher," protested Doctor White, "that is a dormitory for young men, it has no accommodations for ladies!"

"I have inspected the accommodations and find them entirely satisfactory," imperturbably replied Miss Beecher, "and as for those young men, who are of appropriate ages to be my grandsons, they will not trouble me in the least." She stayed, took the course, roomed in the dormitory and became one of the most popular inmates of the building.

Catharine Beecher said in 1873 of the new objectives of The American Woman's Educational Association:

"Since the formation of this Association, more than twenty colleges and professional schools have been opened to women, so that all women of the higher grades of intellect, who wish to enter men's professions, are amply provided with all needed advantages. In consequence of this, the Association has changed its plans and is now aiming to secure the proper training of the daughters of the industrial classes for their future duties as housekeepers, wives, mothers, nurses of infants and the sick, and also all domestic helpers needed in these various departments, and, as far as practicable, to do this in connection with our common schools."

Ida M. Tarbell, in an article in *The American Magazine* of December, 1909, said of this Association, "it did a great and essential work in preparing the way for the universal public school education of today." The Association was dissolved after the death of its founder in 1878.

Catharine Beecher's *Domestic Economy*, published in 1845, had been so successful, that, in collaboration with her sister, Harriet Beecher Stowe, she elaborated it, and combined with

it her cook-book, and issued the combined books under the title of *The Housekeeper and Healthkeeper*, which was re-issued for the last time in 1873. This book and its predecessors were at one time almost as omnipresent in American homes as was in an earlier day, Benjamin Franklin's *Poor Richard's Almanac*. Her chief campaign, other than those for improved educational opportunities for her sex, was for the improvement of the health of American women. She wrote to one woman of her acquaintance, in each of forty-five cities and large towns, and asked her to report on the health of her ten best women friends. The alarming results of these interrogations she published in *Harper's Magazine*. They showed that of these four hundred and fifty representative women, thirty-five per cent. were "habitual invalids," forty-two per cent. were "delicate or diseased," and only twenty-three per cent. were "strong." In her book *Letters to the People on Health and Happiness*, and to some extent in her books *Physiology and Calisthenics* and *The Housekeeper and Healthkeeper*, she set forth definite ways and means to maintain or regain good health. Many of these recommendations sound amazingly modern. For instance, she advised a nap or rest of a half-hour before eating the principal meal of the day, particularly after hard physical or intellectual work. Under the advice of Dr. William R. P. Emerson, a health expert, this rule is now applied at Dartmouth College, where he is the health adviser, and at the Choate School. But some of her advice sounds strangely old-fashioned. For instance, in *The Moral Instructor for Schools and Families* occurred this choice bit of counsel:

"It is a mistake which some have made, in supposing it is wrong to laugh. . . . But those who think it is wrong to do this, ought to avoid it, until they are satisfied that it is right; and we ought not to tempt those to laugh, who think it is wrong."

Catharine Beecher is generally regarded to-day as one of the early anti-suffrage leaders. This is not strictly true. She did claim that woman's greatest wrong was her inequality of opportunity in education and that she should first demand educational equality. She also deplored what she regarded as the unwomanly aggressiveness of the women's rights leaders in demanding their political rights. In the early 'seventies, she wrote the Beechers' old family friend, Dr. Leonard Bacon of New Haven, concocter of the phrase, "Saints, sinners and Beechers":

"My soul is cast down at the ignorance and mistaken zeal of my poor sister, Bell (Mrs. Isabella Beecher Hooker) and her co-agitators. Can you not lend a pen to show what a mercy it is to women to have a head to take the thousand responsibilities of family, and how much moral power is gained by taking a subordinate place? . . .<sup>3</sup>"

She did come out herself, however, for a qualified woman's suffrage. "Let the franchise be given to women," she said in her *Reminiscences*, "on condition that they are duly qualified by paying taxes and a certain measure of education, and then every woman will have new stimulus to fit herself for these responsibilities. And one immediate result would be the increase of intelligent voters." Surely that could hardly be regarded as the recommendation of an anti-suffragist?

Then, too, the tone and temper of this letter<sup>4</sup> to Mrs. Elizabeth Cady Stanton, the great suffrage leader, would scarcely suggest the anti-suffragist: "I am anxious for your own sake and for the sake of 'our good cause' that you should manage wisely the very difficult topic for your Tuesday lecture. To that end, I hope you will read the article on that subject in last week's Nation. . . ." The topic was evidently mar-

<sup>3</sup>Now in the Yale University Library.

<sup>4</sup>Now in the Henry E. Huntington Library.

riage and divorce. Surely the reference to "our good cause" did not refer to the anti-suffrage cause!

In 1870, the still unendowed Hartford Female Seminary, founded by Catharine Beecher forty-seven years before, was in Biblical phrase "faint yet pursuing." It badly needed to have oxygen pumped into it. The unhappy idea that this could best be done by its now elderly and distinguished founder seems to have occurred almost simultaneously to the trustees and the founder herself.

In August of that year she said in a letter to John R. Howard, one of her publishers: "I am now appointed Principal of the Hartford Female Seminary which I founded. I have secured fine teachers to do the work, and my first move will be to introduce *our book*. . . . I never saw fairer prospects of success!"<sup>6</sup>

The old incorrigible optimism completely blinded the good lady to the inevitability of probably the most easily predictable failure toward which she ever headed! Within four months she was out and starting an apparently never concluded controversy with the trustees, as to whether she or they were chargeable with the expense of installing a badly needed new furnace.

One of the pupils has described to the writer her recollection of Catharine Beecher during this, her brief autumnal emergence, as the head of her declining school:

"Every morning the girls, wearing small white aprons, and with on their hair laurel wreaths of paper, would march into the assembly hall to piano music. Miss Beecher, standing alone on the platform, in her self-made black lace dress over pink paper cambric and her self-made shoes with soft soles and velvet uppers, and with her cork-screw curls bobbing up and down, would sing the following song, in which we girls joined in the

<sup>6</sup> Now in the possession of her grandniece, Katharine Seymour Day.

chorus. She would sing in a faint quavering wreck of a voice:

“ ‘Let us cherish  
While yet the taper glows  
And the fresh floweret  
Pluck ere it close.’ ”

Chorus

“ ‘Why are we fond of toil and care  
Why choose the laurel wreath to wear  
And heedless by the lily pass  
That blossoms in our way.’ ”

The ethics of this ditty would seem surprisingly like, “Let us eat, drink and be merry for to-morrow we die.”

“She was a strange old lady,” continued her former young girl pupil who is now of course an old lady herself, “whom we both made fun of and at the same time, respected and admired. She used to give us talks on deportment and said in one such talk, ‘Young ladies, when you have occasion to go on journeys in the railroad cars, do not lie back in the seat (illustrating) but sit erect and sway gently with the motion of the train.’ ”

Mrs. Porter, who lived next door to Miss Beecher’s sister, Mrs. Stowe, in Hartford, related that when Miss Beecher was spending a Sunday evening with them she, looking at the Porters’ nine-year-old son, asked, “Isn’t it time Robert went to bed? All children should go to bed at eight!” Robert went. A little later when they were singing hymns, some one suggested a hymn the chorus of which ran “I am nothing, Lord, Oh nothing—thou art all, all!” “I don’t wish to sing that,” objected Miss Beecher. “I am *not* nothing!”

Miss Beecher attended Trinity Church in Hartford. When she came out of church after the Sunday morning service she would not infrequently go up to a handsomely appointed carriage and say to the coachman as she stepped in, “Whose carriage is this, my man?” And on his replying, “Mrs. Rob-

inson's, ma'am!" Miss Beecher would comment, "She's a friend of mine. You may drive me to number one hundred and ten Gillette Street." And the coachman, not daring to disobey the trained voice of command, the carriage would roll off, and when Mrs. Robinson emerged from the church she had to wait until its return.

Not long after her failure to revive her Hartford school, with an apparently instinctive sense of drama, Catharine Beecher revisited the Fisher farm in Franklin, Massachusetts, then occupied by a grandson of her lover's parents. Professor Fisher's grandnephew, Willard J. Fisher, who was there at the time, a child of five, has written me his recollection of Miss Beecher: "I remember a white haired old lady with screw curls hanging by her temples and the ample skirts of the time, who took me on her lap and told me stories, and showed me finger games. The only one of these that I remember was the one that goes with the rhyme:

" 'Here is the church  
And here is the steeple:  
Open the door,  
And see all the people.'

"I remember that she spent much of her time in the guest room where there was an open fireplace." And he goes on to say that she would sit by that fire by the hour, burning up old letters, which throws light upon the fact that none of the love-letters between Catharine Beecher and the Professor are to be found in the Alexander Metcalf Fisher Collection. And as she burned these letters, she wore on one of her old bony fingers the plain gold engagement ring which young Alexander Fisher had placed upon her soft young finger a half-century before, and which had been ever since her only ornament.

A year before she died, Catharine Beecher left the home of her brother, Edward, in Brooklyn, with whom she had lived

for several years, and went to the home of her brother, Thomas, in Elmira, so as to be near the Gleasons' sanitarium.

On April 26, 1878, two weeks before she died, she wrote Harper Brothers: "I am now trying to have our common schools do more to educate woman for her proper business as housekeeper and healthkeeper, and for this I am consulting various influential friends of education." And in another letter, written two days before her fatal illness, she added: "My plan is to consult the heads of women's insts. and supts. of common schools this summer, and see if what ought to be done can be done. I am in correspondence with the best leaders of popular education in this vicinity, and am going to Phil. and New Jersey to see others and am forming women's comms. to cooperate. I hope to be in Phil. in about ten days. I am stronger than for yrs. but take no new responsibilities. . . ." These were her last written words. Within ten days she was not in Philadelphia, but in her grave.

Her brother, Thomas, said of her last days:

"Like a mirror fractured, each piece like the whole, so sister Catharine 'went to pieces.' Incessantly, yet incoherently active, now with her hands fixing up her well-worn conveniences of dress, shoes and writing apparatus; now writing a page or two of educational planning and correspondence with bishops, statesmen, and capitalists, running ten times a day to play snatches of tunes from her antique repertoire, always ending with a quavering hymn refrain, 'It's better farther on.' Then back to her room, ready for metaphysics until would come the explanation, 'My head is tired, Tom.' "

The night of May 10, 1878, she had an apoplectic stroke. After lying unconscious for two days, she died. A few days afterward her brother Edward,—the brother who was closest to her,—spoke on her life before a large audience in her brother Thomas's church.

Such was the life of this forgotten woman! Educators couple her name with those of Emma Willard and Mary Lyon as the three outstanding pioneer leaders in obtaining more and better education for American women. Of this triumvirate, Catharine Beecher alone has been forgotten. In talking recently to a group of normal-school students, I found they all knew something of Emma Willard and Mary Lyon, but not one had even heard the name of Catharine Beecher—a name once known in almost every American home. What is the reason? Some people say that Emma Willard and Mary Lyon are remembered because they founded institutions that keep alive their memory. This can hardly be the explanation, because Catharine Beecher founded five institutions, one of which is flourishing to-day. Is it that she was overshadowed by her more famous brother, Henry Ward, her sister, Harriet, and even her father? Is it perhaps because the advice of her Aunt Mary Hubbard, so to discipline her temper that "we may love what we are obliged to admire," had not been carried out with entire success? Is it because her efforts were so far flung that the impress of her personality was blurred? Or is it that the opinion of posterity is as capricious in awarding recognition to public characters as is the opinion of their contemporaries?

## CHAPTER VIII

### WILLIAM HENRY BEECHER: 1802-1889

#### THE UNLUCKY

"I AM completely down in the dumps. . . . I do think my future prospects are rather dull," wrote William Beecher in 1824 from Litchfield, to his sister, Catharine, in Hartford. "I was an imaginative boy, somewhat romantic with a sprinkling of minor notes—a sort of sad longing—a feeling that I never should be anything—a sort of black sheep feeling," he wrote late in life in some uncompleted and unpublished reminiscences.<sup>1</sup> ". . . I did not know how to study and none showed me," he continued. "Edward, on the contrary, learned easily. . . . I could not learn—the fact was I had trouble in my head—a gathering and discharge from my left ear while at East Hampton—the whole outer ear was poisoned by the discharge. As I had much tooth and ear ache and my left breast bone being much smaller than the other they feared rickets. . . ."

William Henry Beecher was the second child and eldest son of Lyman Beecher and Roxana Foote. He was born in East Hampton in 1802.

When he was twelve years old the difficult task of teaching William was entrusted to a Reverend Mr. Daggett of New Canaan, Connecticut. There he tried to learn trigonometry, "but couldn't make head nor tail of it." He finally left New Canaan with nothing to show for his efforts or those of Mr. Daggett, except increased dyspepsia, that inherited family

<sup>1</sup>Now in the possession of his granddaughter, Mrs. Ethel Beecher Hamilton, of Toledo, Ohio.

weakness. William observed of his boarding place, "They always had boiled pork and potatoes warmed up for breakfast." That observation perhaps throws light on the increased dyspepsia.

Next he tried studying at home, but with no better results. "They longed to have their first born son a scholar and minister and I fear were sorrowfully disappointed," he commented.

Because of his mechanical skill, he was finally apprenticed to a cabinet-maker in Hartford, but there he was so unhappy that his father had to rescue him and take him home. A clerkship was then found for him in a general store in New Milford, Connecticut, but that did not work out either. William remarked that he never should have been more than a clerk, unless he had married one of the proprietor's daughters. His talents as a clerk in a dry-goods store in Hartford were next weighed and found wanting; also a New York store gave him a tryout, but didn't keep him after the rush season. At twenty-one, he was again at home. "How long I stopped at home, can't say," he lamented, "but the great question was, 'What shall we do with William?'"

William's next venture was in a hardware store in Boston, where he didn't win earthly success but did find heavenly consolation. In other words, he was converted in accordance with the most approved methods of the day. This gave him an ardent desire to become a minister. With funds advanced him by the church he attended and by his fellow-clerks in the hardware store, he determined to study theology at Andover. He went home, thinking his father would delight in his decision. His father of course did rejoice at his conversion but, fervently as he had longed to have all his seven sons in the ministry, he tried his best to dissuade William. Although puzzled and disappointed by his father's attitude, William remained firm and went to Andover. There, his dyspepsia became so acute that he couldn't sleep at night. The only

time he could seem to sleep was when he was struggling over his theological studies during the daytime. He had to go home finally where he continued his studies under his father's direction.

Eventually, he was licensed to preach by a committee of ministers in Boston of which his father was a member. After a year or two as an itinerant preacher, he acquired, through his father's influence, a parish at Newport, Rhode Island. This was in 1830, long before Newport had become a fashionable summer resort. He then persuaded Katharine Edes of Boston, to whom he had been paying court for several years, to consent to an immediate marriage. But even William's wedding was not a cheerful affair. "Was married," as he recounted, "at Mrs. Edes' in Bowdoin Street in the forenoon by my father. Harriet was bridesmaid, no company, no cake, no cards—nothing pleasant about it."

The steeple of William's pre-Revolutionary church in Newport was thought to be unsafe. In windy weather people used it as an alibi to stay away. So he asked his chief deacon if he might pull it down. The deacon objected; to put up the necessary staging would be prohibitively expensive. William asserted he could do it without any staging by casting ropes about it and pulling it down. The deacon thought that impossible but permitted the young minister to try it. To the amazement of every one, he succeeded. William Beecher was invariably triumphant where physical skill was required.

He next tried to raise funds for a new church building, but when his chief subscriber failed in business and was unable to pay anything, he gave up the effort in despair.

About that time he received and accepted a call to the Congregational Church in Middletown, Connecticut, but before he had been there a year, his predecessor, who wanted to return, had succeeded in forcing him to resign. He then obtained the general agency for New England for the Sunday-School Union in which his father was influential.

When Lyman Beecher and his family went to Cincinnati in 1832, William with his wife and baby soon joined them. William had decided to help his father save the West for Protestantism. After some weeks his father learned that a new church was to be organized in Putnam, Ohio. He dispatched William post-haste to try to get it. William was the first candidate on the spot and did get it. There he organized a small church and a little school associated with it and all went well enough until a few years later when he asked for an increase in his five-hundred-dollar salary. The response to this request was so insulting that he felt his self-respect required him to resign. By his activities for temperance and against slavery he had made enemies.

Through the influence of his brother, George, who was on the threshold of success in Rochester, he received a call to Batavia, New York. This was a large country church which paid a salary of one thousand dollars. The few years he was permitted to stay there in peace and quiet represented the pinnacle of William Beecher's success. Before long, however, a group of women took a dislike to him, plotted his downfall and made things so uncomfortable for him that he again had to resign.

"What to do with William?" was once more a family problem, and the problem now was complicated by a wife and six children. Biologically William was successful. He despairingly exclaimed, "I tried in various ways to find employment but in vain."

Finally in 1844, his father took William with him to a ministerial convention, thinking they might there hear of some opening, and, sure enough, they did. A new church was to be started at Toledo, Ohio,—then a town of eighteen hundred inhabitants. William got the position at a salary of eight hundred dollars, and raised money by subscription pledges for a church building. All was going well, when Beecher made the unhappy discovery that his leading deacon and subscriber

owned a hotel with a thriving bar. When he charged the deacon with the inconsistency of this enterprise, it didn't lead the deacon to give it up, but it did make him furious and it did cause him to refuse to pay his subscription and to declare war on his minister. Beecher's salary payments then stopped, and a friend tipped him off that the powerful deacon had sworn to starve him out. Since he and his family had nothing but his salary to live upon, that was not difficult. When his eight-hundred-dollar salary was one thousand dollars in arrears, he told the church authorities he would throw off two hundred dollars if they would pay him the remainder, but when they came back with an offer to pay the decreased amount at the rate of twelve cents on the dollar, William cast Christian persuasion to the winds and sued them. Ultimately, he won every dollar they owed him, with interest, but naturally, he had to resign. He couldn't very well sue a church and preach in it at the same time. He remarked pensively that nobody expressed regret when he left.

After months of anxious waiting, he learned that in the little village of Euclid, six miles east of Cleveland, Ohio, a farm had been left, as the site for a church and school. This chance to make something out of nothing, appealed to his Beecher pioneer missionary spirit, and eagerly he tackled the job even after discovering that the salary was to be only four hundred dollars. When he pointed out the impossibility of supporting a family on that sum, a group of the more well-to-do parishioners agreed to add one hundred out of their own pockets of which they never, in fact, paid but fifty. He succeeded in raising funds enough to put up modest church and school buildings, but, three years afterward, when his diminutive salary had fallen three hundred dollars in arrears, he gave up the struggle.

His last church was in North Brookfield, Massachusetts, where he became the village postmaster as well. One day when the mails were late, he posted this notice on the bulletin-board

in the post-office; "Mails three hours late, snow on the mountains." There was no snow and there were no mountains. But he explained to the one person who challenged the notice, "The real explanation would have satisfied no one, while this statement has satisfied every one, except you."

The only printed matter which William Beecher left behind him was a pamphlet entitled, *The Duty of the Church to Her Ministry*, a discourse which he had twice delivered at the installation of fellow-ministers. Out of the fulness of bitter personal experience, he indicted the system which condemned the rank and file of evangelical clergymen to overwork, underpay and constant changes of parish, induced by backbiting and petty persecution.

After his wife's death in 1870, he gave up his parish and postmastership and went to Chicago where he lived with his daughters until his own death in 1889.

William Beecher's life illustrated how dangerous were the Beecher family traits. He had the same courage, the same honesty, the same humor and the same missionary zeal, but in his case they served only to insure his being constantly harried and persecuted.

## CHAPTER IX

### EDWARD BEECHER: 1803-1895

#### THE SCHOLAR

Not infrequently, during his years at Yale, Edward Beecher would leave New Haven, after his last class on Friday, and walk to his father's home in Litchfield, arriving for breakfast the next morning. He would then work on his father's farm through the day and sing in the choir of his father's church in the evening. Sunday morning he would again sing in the choir, and after Sunday dinner would start back to New Haven with a knapsack of food strapped on his back, to reduce his cost of living during the coming week. The next morning he would get back to New Haven in time for chapel and the day's work.

Edward was Lyman Beecher's second son and third child. He was born in East Hampton in 1803. After fitting for college at South Farms Academy in Litchfield, he entered Yale in 1818. He helped to pay his college expenses by alternate studying and teaching just as did his brother, Henry Ward, a decade later, at Amherst. Six months before he graduated from Yale, as the valedictorian of his class, in the summer of 1822, he wrote his sister, Catharine, about his daily régime while teaching the nucleus of what became the Hartford Public High School:

" . . . I am obliged to go every day a quarter of an hour before time so as to be there in season and to begin in season, and sometimes in order to hear all the classes, I am obliged to keep beyond three hours (for I have twenty-six scholars and sixteen classes, some classes having three in them, some two and some one), so I al-

ways employ at least seven hours in the school, besides this I sleep seven hours, and in order to preserve my health I exercise one hour every day—this I do by cutting wood as it is the most expeditious way of getting exercise. Of course to balance all this I must take something to eat but I make my meals as short as possible, but I will allow forty-five minutes for the three. Besides this I allow about one and one-half hrs. for reading the Bible and prayer. These are all of the constant and regular daily demands upon my time and leave me six hours and forty-five minutes a day to employ. I have in the first place the translations and Latin compositions of my scholars to correct out of school . . . and a thousand little things that occur every day which cannot be specified which occupy five minutes or so. And I forgot to mention the article of washing and dressing which takes me about twenty minutes every day."

Besides all this he attended occasional meetings, studied music, wrote lectures on "the formation of habits of mind," "performed hard questions in the mathematics," and paid infrequent social calls. "You may perhaps begin to think that I am busy," he concluded. "I am so, and yet there is so much that I wish to do and cannot, that at times I almost feel as if I did nothing." And yet we are in the habit of looking back pensively to the good old days of leisurely living!

Edward was not only the valedictorian of his class but one of its leading athletes. That was of course long before the days of organized college athletics.

He ended a letter to Catharine written from Litchfield a few weeks after his graduation: ". . . For my own self I should not wish to live longer, but my duty to God and my friends requires me to stay. . . ." These duties, in fact, detained him in this world for seventy-three years longer.

For the next two years he continued to teach the high-school group in Hartford, then he went for a year to the Andover Theological Seminary and finally returned to Yale as a tutor

during the college year of 1825-26. At that time he wrote an article for *The Christian Spectator* called, "The Duty of an Equable Culture of All the Powers," meaning all the physical and mental powers, the precepts of which he lived up to throughout his long life. At the end of the year this twenty-three-year-old youngster was called to the pastorate of the Park Street Church in Boston, one of the most powerful evangelical churches in the country. He accepted and began his duties shortly after his father, Lyman Beecher, had begun his as the pastor of the Hanover Street Church of Boston.

When it had become apparent that the youth was not to become at once a second Lyman Beecher, a group of malcontents began to conspire against him. Writing to Catharine, his father referred to this opposition in these words: "I think he [Edward] has got by the pinch, and will resist if he may have health and write as I can advise, and he can execute—they may do what they please, then. . . ."

And in order to keep his health, Edward used daily the gymnastic apparatus which he and his father had put up in the latter's back yard and on rainy days they shoveled the sand from one side of the cellar to the other. One may imagine how eagerly they discussed, while doing their exercises, the plans for frustrating Edward's enemies! Between them, they did thwart their machinations and he could have stayed on indefinitely in his large and powerful church, but he didn't. Even before Lyman Beecher had given up his large Boston church to accept the presidency of struggling little Lane Seminary, Edward had resigned his important pulpit to take the presidency of a fledgling one-building college on the prairies of Illinois. That was in 1831.

Illinois College had been founded two years before in Jacksonville by a handful of local enthusiasts for education, assisted by a group of seven students of the Yale Theological School who had pledged themselves to devote their lives to the promotion of religion and education in the West. When these

men, known as the "Yale band," asked President Day who would be the best man for president of their embryonic college, he told them Edward Beecher if they could get him. Nobody but a Beecher would have given up a powerful eastern church, to assume responsibility for a feeble western college. But here was a chance to help his father save that great western country for education and Protestantism—also a chance for pioneering—always an irresistible appeal to a Beecher.

So Edward Beecher took active charge of Illinois College in 1832, just before his father assumed the presidency of Lane Seminary in Cincinnati. He had living quarters in one wing of the solitary little brick building now known as Beecher Hall, and a salary of eleven hundred dollars which was seldom paid in full and sometimes not at all. It took him three years to get a charter from a legislature made up of suspicious plainsmen. Finally he got it in 1835 over the opposition of a legislator who boasted that he was "born in a briar thicket, rocked in a hog trough and had never had his genius cramped by the pestilential air of a college."<sup>1</sup> One member of that legislature was young Abraham Lincoln.

The college day opened with prayers at five o'clock in the morning and closed with evening prayers at six, five in the winter. The cost of board, room and tuition was about one hundred dollars a year. The students helped to pay their way by working on the farm and in shops. When President Beecher's young brother, Thomas, entered in 1839, he shocked the proprieties by asking permission to absent himself from evening prayers on Saturdays, so that he might go hunting. The request was indignantly denied. Later young Thomas was suspended because of "repeated disorders tending to disturb the worship of God in chapel."

What with ignorance, bigotry, slavery and the panic of 1837 Edward Beecher's path as a college president was a thorny

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<sup>1</sup> *Illinois College: A Centennial History 1829-1929*, by Charles Henry Rammelkamp, President of the College.

one. His friend, Elijah P. Lovejoy, was murdered for daring to print anti-slavery sentiments in his paper, *The Observer*. He was shot while helping to defend the store in which his printing press was being guarded in Alton. Edward Beecher had helped him to land the press from the river boat and house it the night before, when, thinking there would be no further trouble, he left for home. Had he stayed, he might have been shot too because, next to Lovejoy, he was the man whom the pro-slavery mob most hated. That was in 1837.<sup>2</sup>

Although like all the Beechers he preferred to stand alone and not join societies, he felt obliged to become one of the founders of the Illinois Anti-Slavery Society. His association with Lovejoy and his anti-slavery sentiments brought abuse and obliquy upon him and retarded the growth of his little college. Many of the leading citizens of the state were pro-slavery men to whom the position of Beecher and the members of his faculty was, naturally, very offensive.

In 1844, after a desperate financial attempt to keep the struggling college alive because of the panic of 1837, Beecher received and accepted a call to the pastorate of the Salem Street Church of Boston. Temporarily the Beecher missionary zeal was submerged by exhaustion and discouragement. He had thought in his simplicity that the president of a college was allowed opportunity for scholarship. He had had to devote all his time to raising money and other almost equally dreary practical problems. So Edward Beecher returned with a sigh of relief to the flesh-pots of Boston.

"You will see him in the streets and at the exchange, in the reading rooms, in the police court, at the public meetings in Faneuil Hall and Tremont Temple," said a contemporary article on the pastor of the Salem Street Church. "He is a sociable, accessible, generous man and capital company."

<sup>2</sup>These events are described in *Narrative of Riots at Alton*, by the Reverend Edward Beecher. For Edward Beecher's books see p. 418.



Edward Beecher, a portrait (1803-1895).



Mrs Thomas C. Perkins (Mary Foote Beecher) who lived longer than any other member of the family (1805-1900).

In 1849 he was one of the founders of the *Congregationalist*, the paper of his denomination, and for its first four years he served as editor-in-chief.

By 1855 he had become restive under the restraint of relative conventionality and prosperity. Again he heard the call of the West and again the Beecher spirit of the pioneer missionary dominated him. He resigned his large successful church, and, with the backing of Plymouth Church, went back to Illinois and founded a Congregational church in Galesburg.

But before leaving Boston this second time, he had become famous, at least in theological circles, by the publication of *The Conflict of Ages*. In this book by the demolition of the doctrines of "original sin" and "total depravity," he did more than any one had previously done to abolish the belief in a literal Hell and to defend God's reputation. He repudiated the charge of the Old-School Calvinists that God condemns unhappy mortals to eternal hell-fire for refusing to do that which they are incapable of doing. He asserted a pre-existence for every soul born into this world in which there was full opportunity to do right and a deliberate choice of wrong and thus he explained the inborn tendency to wrong-doing in human beings. You will recall that his father jocosely commented, "Edward, you've destroyed the Calvinistic barns, but I hope you don't delude yourself that the animals are going into your little theological hencoop." "The little theological hencoop" was the theory of the pre-existence of souls, and apparently the only theological animal of any standing who went into it was Edward's younger brother, Charles. And for doing so, he was cruelly punished. The book ran through five large printings in three months. Everybody in religious circles read and discussed it.

Edward Beecher was Doctor of Divinity, having been given that degree by Marietta College in 1841. He was the only one of Dr. Lyman Beecher's seven sons who became in turn Doctor

Beecher. A doctorate was offered to Henry Ward but he spurned it.

Back of Doctor Beecher's house<sup>3</sup> in Galesburg lived a railroad conductor who cooperated with him in his efforts in behalf of escaping slaves. The Beecher house was one of the stations of the "Underground Railway." On Sunday afternoons Doctor Beecher used sometimes to stroll through the back gate and go over to the conductor's yard for a friendly chat. Other clergymen in the town regarded this as a scandalous proceeding, ministers were not supposed to pay social calls on the Sabbath.<sup>4</sup>

While living in Galesburg, Edward Beecher increased the suspicion with which he was regarded by the orthodox and the conventional, by accepting the presidency of a woman's suffrage convention which met at Springfield.

In 1871 Beecher retired in order to live in Brooklyn so that he might be near Henry Ward, the magnet of the family, to help him with the editing of *The Christian Union*, and have time for his own studies and writing. While in Brooklyn he wrote his book, *The Papal Conspiracy Exposed*, which was, in effect, a sequel to his father's series of lectures exposing the supposed designs of the Papacy on this country.

Also at this period he established several Congregational churches in various parts of New Jersey. But at the age of eighty-one in 1884, he became restive in his semi-retirement and went back into active preaching, and every Sunday for the next five years preached at the Parkville Congregational Church, Brooklyn. In the spring of 1889, when he was eighty-six, he was struck by a train and his leg broken. The leg was so badly shattered that when he came to consciousness, the surgeon who had been summoned said, "Doctor Beecher, I feel obliged to tell you, Sir, that your leg may have to be ampu-

<sup>3</sup>The location of his house in Galesburg is now known as "Beecher Place."

<sup>4</sup>This was told me by Myra H. Patch, the conductor's daughter.

tated." "Oh, that's all right, Doctor,—always thought I'd rather like a wooden leg," replied Beecher. But so extraordinary proved his powers of recovery that his leg did not have to be amputated, and thereafter he hobbled about for six years more, not with a wooden leg, but merely with a crutch. He died in his Brooklyn home at 182 Macon Street in 1895 at the age of ninety-two. Up to his last short illness, he had remained both mentally and physically active.

He had presided over the destinies of four churches and founded many more, he had been the first president of one of the earliest colleges of the West, he had served on the editorial staff of two papers, he had written a half-dozen books, and he and his wife, Isabella Porter Jones, had brought up eleven children of whom three only survived them. His wife lived a few months only after her husband's death. While it may have been true that he never had to work harder than he did when he described to his sister Catharine a typical day in his Hartford school, surely he never had much time to "loaf and invite his soul."

## CHAPTER X

### MARY FOOTE BEECHER: 1805-1900

#### THE LADY

MARY FOOTE BEECHER was an anomaly, she was the only purely private Beecher. During a long and blameless life, never did she deviate into public view by writing a story, article or book, making a speech, giving a lecture, preaching a sermon or conducting a public enterprise. Measured by the proprieties of that day she was the only lady in the family.

Lyman Beecher's second daughter and fourth child, she was born in East Hampton in 1805. After graduating from Miss Pierce's School in Litchfield, she taught in her sister Catharine's Hartford Female Seminary. There her career as a teacher was cut short by the rising young lawyer, Thomas C. Perkins. They lived happily ever afterward right there in Hartford. She was a model wife, mother, friend and neighbor. Perhaps her life was too happy to be eventful—in any case it furnished no copy for a biographer. She gave much sound advice to the more conspicuous members of the family, which they probably would have done well to heed more than they did. But in her granddaughter, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, the impulse for pioneer intellectual effort and public service seems to have been all the stronger for having been dammed up for a generation or two.

In old age, Mrs. Perkins became ambitious to live to be one hundred and she fell short of her goal by five years only. I remember when the old lady was in training for this century run, one was allowed to talk with her only for five minutes. Her attendant watched the clock.

Mrs. Perkins used to say from time to time when surrounded by solicitous and admiring friends and relatives, "I'm only a wretched old woman!"

This remark immediately evoked a chorus of protests such as, "Why, grandmother, why Aunt Mary, how can you say such a thing? You're the center of attraction in this house. You're so beautiful to look at, etc., etc. . . ."

The handsome old lady would smile with satisfaction and repeat the maneuver after a suitable interval.

She died in Hartford on March 14, 1900, on the same day that her nineteen-years-younger brother, Thomas, died in Elmira.

## CHAPTER XI

### HARRIET BEECHER: 1811-1896

#### THE OBSCURE

"HARRIET is a genius. I would give a hundred dollars if she was a boy. She is as odd as she is intelligent and studious," said Lyman Beecher in a letter<sup>1</sup> written in 1819 when Harriet was seven. "Harriet makes just as many wry faces, is just as odd, and loves to be laughed at as much as ever," wrote her elder sister Catharine at about the same time.

"My father was famous for his power of exciting family enthusiasm," wrote Harriet Beecher Stowe in recalling her childhood in her father's autobiography. "Whenever he had a point to carry or work to be done, he would work the whole family up to a pitch of fervent zeal in which the strength of each one seemed quadrupled. For instance, the wood of the family used to be brought in winter on sleds and piled up in the yard exactly over the spot where father wished in early spring to fix his cucumber and melon frames; for he always made it a point to have cucumbers as soon as Doctor Taylor who lived in New Haven [the President of the Yale Divinity School] and had much warmer and drier land; and he did it by dint of contrivance and cucumber frames as aforesaid. Of course, as all this wood was to be cut, split and carried into the woodhouse before an early garden could be started, it required a miracle of generalship to get it done, considering the immense quantity required in that climate to keep an old windy castle of a house comfortable. How the axes rung and the chips flew and the jokes and stories flew faster; and when all was cut and split, then

<sup>1</sup> Now in the possession of Harry Ward Foote.

came the great work of wheeling in and piling; and then I, sole little girl among so many boys, was sucked into the vortex of enthusiasm by father's well-pointed declaration that he 'wished Harriet was a boy, she would do more than any of them.'

"I remember putting on a little black coat which I thought looked more like the boys', casting needle and thread to the wind, and working almost like one possessed for a day and a half, till in the afternoon the wood was all in and piled and the chips swept up. Then father tackled the horse into the cart and proclaimed a grand fishing party down to Little Pond. And how we all floated among the lily-pads in our boat, christened 'The Yellow Perch' and everyone of us caught a string of fish which we displayed in triumph on our return."

"Mother was an enthusiastic horticulturalist in all the small ways that limited means allowed," wrote Mrs. Stowe of her recollection of her mother, Roxana Foote. "Her brother John in New York had just sent her a small parcel of fine tulip bulbs. I remember rummaging these out of an obscure corner of the nursery one day when she was gone out, and being strongly seized with the idea that they were good to eat, and using all the little English I then possessed, to persuade my brothers that these were onions such as grown people ate and would be very nice for us. So we fell to and devoured the whole; and I recollect being somewhat disappointed in the odd, sweetish taste and thinking that onions were not as nice as I had supposed. Then mother's serene face appeared at the nursery door and we all ran toward her and with one voice began to tell our discovery and achievement. We had found this bag of onions and had eaten them all up.

"Also I remember that there was not even a momentary expression of impatience but that she sat down and said, 'My dear children, what you have done makes Mamma very sorry; those were not onion roots but roots of beautiful flowers and if you had let them alone, Mamma would have had next summer in the garden great beautiful red and yellow flowers such as you never saw.' I remember

how drooping and dispirited we all grew at this picture and how sadly we regarded the empty paper bag. . . .

"Although mother's bodily presence disappeared from our circle I think that her memory and example had more influence in moulding her family, in deterring from evil and exciting to good, than the living presence of many mothers. It was a memory that met us everywhere, for every person in the town, from the highest to the lowest, seemed to have been so impressed by her character and life that they constantly reflected some portion of it back upon us."

As soon as Harriet learned to read she developed a passion for reading. Also, in contrast to her brother, Henry, she early developed an extraordinary verbal memory. Before she was ten she could recite between thirty and forty hymns. Her father's dominantly theological library was for the most part a barren waste for a romance-hungry child but amid the sermons, tracts and treatises she made some richly rewarding discoveries among which were a battered fragment of *Don Quixote*, Cotton Mather's *Magnalia* and *The Arabian Nights*. On her magic carpet she could float away into pure romance whenever the boys refused to let her go with them on an expedition because she was only a girl or to escape any such childhood grief. The Cotton Mather stories made her feel, as she said, that the "very ground she walked on was consecrated by some special dealings of God's providence."

When Harriet heard Colonel Talmadge, who had been one of Washington's officers, read the Declaration of Independence on a Fourth of July it made her "long to do something, I knew not what: to fight for my country or to make some declaration on my own account." Nothing could have seemed more improbable then than that Harriet would one day make declarations on her own account which whole nations would heed!

When in 1822 Professor Alexander Fisher, her elder sister Catharine's betrothed lover, was lost at sea, he left his library

to Catharine and it was moved into the Litchfield parsonage. Because of the doubt about the young Professor's orthodoxy, Lyman Beecher announced to his children that they were not to read the Professor's books until he had gone over and approved them. When he came upon Scott's novels, more particularly *Ivanhoe*, he exclaimed, "You may read Scott's novels. I have always disapproved of novels as trash, but in these is real genius and real culture and you may read them."

In the fall when the apples were harvested apple butter was made in enormous quantities and stored in barrels in the cellar where it remained frozen during the winter. The children used it in place of butter. "I have the image of my father still as he sat working the apple-peeler," said Mrs. Stowe in recalling an evening devoted to making apple butter. "'Come, George,' he said, 'I'll tell you what we'll do to make the evening go off. You and I'll take turns, and see who'll tell the most out of Scott's novels——' and so they took them novel by novel, reciting scenes and incidents which kept the eyes of all the children wide open and made the work go on without flagging."

John Erskine believes<sup>2</sup> that Scott's novels had a great influence upon Harriet Beecher Stowe's style—particularly upon her manner of using historical material. If this be so then the tragic death of Catharine's betrothed not only profoundly affected the religious beliefs of the Beechers but also the literary style of their outstanding writer.

"It was in Aunt Esther's room," wrote Mrs. Stowe, "that I first found a stray volume of Lord Byron's poetry which she gave me one afternoon to appease my craving for something to read. It was the 'Corsair.' I shall never forget how I kept calling to Aunt Esther to hear the wonderful things that I found in it and to ask what they could mean. 'Aunt Esther, what does it mean——'

<sup>2</sup>He so expresses himself in his book, *Leading American Novelists*.

"‘One I never loved enough to hate?’

“‘Oh, child, it’s one of Byron’s strong expressions.’

“I went home absorbed and wondering about Byron; and after that I listened to everything that father and mother said at the table about him. I remember hearing father relate the account of his separation from his wife; [Little did Harriet realize that she would become Lady Byron’s friend and later the chief defender of her reputation] and one day hearing him say with a sorrowful countenance as if announcing the death of someone very interesting to him, ‘My dear, Byron is dead—gone.’ After being a while silent, he said, ‘Oh, I’m sorry that Byron is dead. I did hope he would live to do something for Christ. What a harp he might have swept!’ ”

The next Sunday Lyman Beecher preached on Byron. “He closed with a most eloquent lamentation over the wasted life and misused powers of the great poet. I was eleven years old at the time and did not generally understand father’s sermons but this I understood perfectly and it has made an impression on me that has never been effaced. . . . Father often said in after years that he wished he could have seen Byron and presented to his mind his views of religious truth. He thought if Byron ‘could only have talked with Taylor and me it might have got him out of his troubles.’ ” Surely naïve self-confidence could have gone no further!

While in Miss Pierce’s School in Litchfield Harriet had the great advantage of studying composition under that remarkable teacher John P. Brace. “Mr. Brace exceeded all teachers I ever knew in the faculty of teaching composition,” she wrote. “The constant excitement in which he kept the minds of his pupils—the wide and varied regions of thought into which he led them—formed a preparation for teaching composition, the main requisite for which, whatever people may think, is to have something which one feels interested to say.”

When Harriet was twelve years old Mr. Brace selected her essay as one of the three worthy to be read at a public exhibi-



*Harriet Beecher Stowe*

A crayon sketch made in London by George Richmond in 1853, the year after  
the publication of "Uncle Tom's Cabin"



A pencil sketch of Lyman Beecher (1775-1863).

tion before the literati of Litchfield. The question she discussed was, "Can the Immortality of the Soul Be Proved by the Light of Nature?" When her paper was read she noticed "that father, who was sitting on high by Mr. Brace, brightened and looked interested and at the close I heard him ask, 'Who wrote that composition?' 'Your daughter, sir,' was the answer. It was the proudest moment of my life. There was no mistaking father's face when he was pleased and to have interested him was past all juvenile triumphs."

One of the "young intellectual" removers of Victoria halos has insinuated that Lyman Beecher's surprise on this occasion must have been simulated since he was obviously the real author of his daughter's alleged paper. According to this ingeniously hostile critic Harriet at twelve began her career as a plagiarist with her father as her accomplice. Why should the "young intellectuals" be particularly bitter against the Beechers? Is it perhaps because the Beechers exasperate them by constantly breaking by their humanness and unconventionality the conventional pattern of an elder day to which they are supposed to conform?

In 1827, after Lyman Beecher had moved with his family from Litchfield to Boston, Harriet wrote her sister, Catharine, this letter which worried her:

"I don't know as I am fit for anything and I have thought that I could wish to die young and let the remembrance of me and my faults perish in the grave rather than live, as I fear I do, a trouble to everyone. Mamma often tells me that I am a strange inconsistent being. Sometimes I could not sleep and have groaned and cried till midnight while in the daytime I tried to appear cheerful and succeeded so well that Papa reproved me for laughing so much. I was so absent sometimes that I made strange mistakes and then they all laughed at me, and I laughed too though I felt as though I should go distracted. I wrote rules; made out a regular system for

dividing my time; but my feelings vary so much that it is almost impossible for me to be regular."

The strong-minded Catharine decided this state of things must stop. The family tendency to melancholy was developing to a dangerous extent in her young sister. She got her to come to Hartford where she could have young companionship and could, under her supervision, learn to be a teacher of drawing and painting in her school.

Catharine's remedy was apparently effective. A year later Harriet concluded a letter to her brother, Edward, "He (God) has given me talents and I will lay them at his feet, well satisfied, if He will accept them. All my powers He can enlarge. He made my mind and He can teach me to cultivate and exert its faculties."

With her most intimate friend, Georgiana May, she used to talk, dream and read poetry in a quiet grove on the banks of the Park River. Here she determined that when she had become a great author and made a fortune she would build a beautiful house. And here she did in fact build, over a generation later, a house which materialized her girlhood dreams although with the perversity of realism the dream developed some nightmarish aspects.

From Cincinnati in 1832, whither she had gone with her father when he became the president of Lane Seminary, she wrote in a letter to Georgiana May, "Oh my dear G., it is scarcely well to love friends thus. . . . I check myself when expressing feelings like this, so much has been said of it by the sentimental who talk what they could not have felt. But it is so deeply sincerely so with me that sometimes it will overflow. Well, there is a heaven, . . . a heaven . . . a world of love and love after all is the life-blood, the existence, the all in all of mind." If any one ever believed that "God is love," it was Harriet Beecher!

When Catharine Beecher founded in Cincinnati the Western Female Seminary, Harriet, in spite of ill-health and depression, valiantly helped her in planning, teaching and even text-book writing. She wrote in 1832 a geography which embodied her sister's and her own ideas of how that subject should be taught. It was published the following year. "Bishop Purcell [the Roman Catholic Bishop of that diocese] visited our school today and expressed himself as greatly pleased that we had opened such an one here," she wrote Georgiana. "He spoke of my poor little geography and thanked me for the unprejudiced manner in which I had treated the Catholic question in it. I was of course flattered that he should have known anything of the book. . . ." When one remembers that one of Lyman Beecher's chief reasons for going to Cincinnati was "to hold the West for Protestantism," this speaks well for the fair-mindedness both of Harriet and the Bishop.

"Recently, I have been reading the life of Madame de Staël and 'Corinne,'" she continued. "I have felt an intense sympathy with many parts of that book, with many parts of her character. But in America feelings vehement and absorbing like hers become still more deep, morbid and impassioned by the constant habits of self-government which the rigid forms of our society demand. They are repressed and they burn inward till they burn the very soul, leaving only dust and ashes. It seems to me the intensity with which my mind has thought and felt on every subject presented to it has had this effect. It has withered and exhausted it, and though young I have no sympathy with the feelings of youth. All that is enthusiastic, all that is impassioned in admiration of nature, of writing, of character, in devotional thought and emotion or in the emotions of affection, I have felt with vehement and absorbing intensity,—felt till my mind is exhausted and seems to be sinking into deadness. Half of my time I am glad to remain in listless vacancy, to busy myself with trifles, since thought is pain and emotion is pain."

In an effort to force her thoughts into more normal channels Harriet joined the Semi-Colon Club—a literary club in which the members wrote and discussed papers. This club had among its members, beside her sister, Catharine, Professor Calvin Ellis Stowe of the Seminary and his wife—although still in the early thirties he was already a Biblical scholar of eminence; Judge James Hall, the editor of the *Western Monthly*; Mrs. Peters, afterward founder of the Philadelphia School of Design; Mrs. Caroline Lee Hentz; C. P. Cranch, and Salmon P. Chase, who became Lincoln's Secretary of the Treasury and later Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of the United States.

Of this club Harriet wrote her friend, Georgiana May: "My first piece was a letter from Bishop Butler, written in his outrageous style of parentheses and fogification. My second a satirical essay on the modern uses of languages. This I shall send to you, as some of the gentlemen, it seems, took a fancy to it and requested leave to put it in the *Western Magazine* and so it is in print. It is ascribed to Catharine or I don't know that I should have let it go. I have no notion of appearing in *propria personae*." At length she won a fifty-dollar prize which the *Western Monthly* offered for the best story. The story was called *Uncle Lot*—a prophetic title. That so encouraged her that from then on she devoted most of her spare time to writing.

While in the East attending the graduation of her brother, Henry Ward, at Amherst, Harriet Beecher learned of the death of her intimate friend, Eliza Tyler Stowe—the wife of Professor Calvin Stowe. She hurried home to help comfort the despairing young widower whom she continued to comfort for the remainder of his life.

Eliza Tyler had been a very beautiful young woman both in person and in character—also she had been a fine singer. She and Professor Stowe had been married for only a year

and he was so prostrated by her death that his friends, fearing for his reason, raised a purse to send him on a journey to see what change of scene might do for him. It did little, but the consolations of his wife's friend, Harriet Beecher, proved just what he needed. They were married in 1836. Their love of Eliza Tyler and sorrow for her always remained one of the strong links between them. With the first receipts from *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, almost twenty years later, they engaged an artist to paint a portrait of Eliza from memory assisted by daguerreotypes. The painter's memory was vivid because, as a young man, he had been in love with her. Thereafter as long as Professor and Mrs. Stowe both lived they spent each year a portion of Eliza Tyler's birthday in front of her portrait, reminiscing about her.

It was the year of his marriage to Harriet Beecher that Professor Stowe went to Europe for the double purpose of buying books for Lane Seminary and making a study of the public schools of Europe, more particularly of Prussia, to secure the necessary data for the founding of a public school system for the state of Ohio. In a steamer letter which his bride gave him to open after the ship had sailed he read: "Now, my dear, that you are gone where you are out of the reach of my care, advice and good management, it is fitting you should have something under my hand and seal for your comfort and furtherance in the new world you are going to. Firstly, I must caution you to set your face as a flint against 'the cultivation of indigo'—in any way or shape." In future years she was to say in her letter to Mrs. Follen of England, "I was married when I was twenty-five years old to a man rich in Greek and Hebrew, Latin and Arabic, and, alas! rich in nothing else." But unfortunately he was rich in something else and that was in moods of melancholy when, as his wife called it, he "cultivated indigo." In fact, he was so much more liberally endowed with this unhappy characteristic than Har-

riet that one heard nothing further of her own depressed moods after their marriage. He was, in short, a highly emotional uncontrolled child of Nature who seesawed between moods of exaltation and intense depression. A scholar and a wit he was always stimulating, frequently amusing but at times an uncomfortable companion. Wherever he went he carried with him a Greek Testament and a copy of Dante's *Divine Comedy* in the original. Besides being a recognized authority in Biblical literature he belonged to that now completely extinct species—the general scholar. But in all matters requiring either mechanical skill or business ability he was as helpless as a baby. He was short, enormously fond of good food, and gradually expanded in girth until he became almost spherical in contour.

While he was in Europe his wife remained in Cincinnati where she helped her brother, Henry Ward, edit the *Cincinnati Inquirer* and gave birth to twin daughters.<sup>3</sup>

In 1838, Catharine Beecher wrote<sup>4</sup> to Mrs. L. H. Sigourney of Hartford, the author:

"I am now writing at sister Harriet's who in the second year of her marriage was the mother of three children. She has had ill health and care and anxiety enough to wear her out but has gone through severe troubles with great quietness and equanimity. Her twins are healthy pretty little girls just beginning to talk and run alone and as they sit at each end of their swing cradle with little brother between them, it looks like a nest of young birds. . . .

"Since I have been collecting pieces it has occurred to me that as everybody who wants such sort of articles comes to you, that you might dispose of these pieces *more profitably* (for it is a money making effort) than she or I could do at this distance from the headquarters of literature. Trusting to your kind interest in a young

<sup>3</sup>Harriet and Eliza.

<sup>4</sup>Letter now in the possession of the Connecticut Historical Society.

and literary mother I commend them to your care and discretion to dispose of as you shall deem best for her interests. I wish to have her name 'Mrs. Harriet Beecher Stowe' put to them—for I have taken credit of much she has written and entirely against my will. . . ."

It does not appear with how much enthusiasm Mrs. Sigourney welcomed this unsought opportunity to become what we should now call a literary agent, although without pay. While the Beechers were not grasping in the commonly accepted sense they certainly never went without for lack of asking for what they wanted. To be their friend had its penalties as well as privileges.

A friend of Harriet who volunteered at this time to help her in her literary work by taking her dictation described the difficulties under which she wrote:

" 'I am ready to write,' said I. 'The last sentence was: "What is this life to one who has suffered as I have?" What next?'

" 'Shall I put in the brown or the white bread first?' said Mina.

" 'The brown first,' said Harriet.

" 'What is this life to one who has suffered as I have,' I repeated.

" Harriet brushed the flour off her apron and sat down for a moment in a muse. Then she dictated as follows:

" 'Under the breaking of my heart I have borne up. I have borne up under all that tries a woman—but this thought—oh, Henry!'

" 'Ma'am, shall I put ginger into this pumpkin?' queried Mina.

" 'No you may let that alone just now,' replied Harriet. She then proceeded:

" 'I know my duty to my children. I see the hour must come. You must take them, Henry; they are my last earthly comfort.'

" 'Ma'am, what shall I do with these egg-shells and all this truck here?' interrupted Mina.

he taught and what have we here? What confusion, what agony, what dismay, what wreck and waste! . . . ”

The next year, after the birth of her third daughter, Georgiana May, Mrs. Stowe wrote: “Our straits for money this year are unparalleled even in our annals. Even our bright and cheery neighbor Allen begins to look blue and says six hundred dollars is the very most we can hope to collect of our salary, once twelve hundred dollars.” This was at the time Lane Seminary had been all but wrecked by the slavery controversy.

Some months later she wrote her husband who was attending a conference in Detroit:

“It is a dark, sloppy, rainy, muddy, disagreeable day, and I have been working hard (for me) all day in the kitchen, washing dishes, looking into closets and seeing a great deal of that dark side of domestic life which a housekeeper may who will investigate too curiously into minutiae in warm, damp weather—

“I am sick of the smell of sour milk and sour meat and sour everything and then the clothes *will* not dry and no wet thing does and everything smells mouldy; and altogether I feel as if I never wanted to eat again. . . . I suffer with sensible distress in the brain, as I have done more or less since my sickness last winter, a distress which some days takes from me all power of planning or executing anything; and you know that, except this poor head, my unfortunate household has no mainspring, for nobody feels any kind of responsibility to do a thing in time, place or manner, except as I oversee it. . . .”

Finally her symptoms became so alarming that she was hurried off to Doctor Wesselhoeft’s water-cure establishment at Brattleboro, Vermont.

The Lord furnished the money through strangers just as He always did in Beecher family emergencies. “The money for my journey has been sent in from an unknown hand in a

wonderful manner. All this shows the care of our Father and encourages me to rejoice and to hope in Him," wrote Mrs. Stowe. And a few days after her departure her husband said in a letter to her: "When I returned from the steamer the morning you left I found a letter from Mrs. G. W. Bull of New York inclosing \$50 on account of the sickness in my family. There was another inclosing \$50 more from a Mrs. Devereaux of Raleigh, N. C., besides some smaller sums from others. My heart went out to God in aspiration and gratitude. None of the donors, so far as I know, have I ever seen or heard of before." Certainly the Lord gave them slight impulse to try to become financially independent!

"I should really rejoice to hear that you and father and mother, with Professor and Mrs. Allen, Mrs. K. and a few others of the same calibre would agree to meet together for dancing cotillons," wrote Mrs. Stowe from the water cure. "It would do you all good and if you took Mr. K.'s wife and poor Miss Much-Afraid, her daughter, into the alliance it would do them good. Bless me! what a profane set everybody would think you were and yet you are the people of all the world most solemnly in need of it. I wish you could be with me in Brattleboro' and coast down hill on a sled, go sliding and snowballing by moonlight! I would snowball every bit of the hypo out of you!" And that was written in 1846 when solemnity was still identified with holiness and laughter with sin!

As soon as Mrs. Stowe returned from the water cure the Professor had in turn to go. While he was there Cincinnati was smitten with the cholera scourge which carried off their baby, Samuel Charles, Doctor Stowe received and accepted a call to a professorship at Bowdoin College, and Mrs. Stowe set out for Brunswick, Maine, without the slightest premonition that she was there to write an epochal book and become famous. She had reached middle life in poverty, hardship, obscurity and frail health and nothing now seemed likely to alter her humble destiny.

## CHAPTER XII

### HARRIET BEECHER STOWE

#### THE BUILDING OF UNCLE TOM'S CABIN

As a child in Litchfield, Connecticut, Harriet Beecher began, unconsciously, to build *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Her aunt, Mary Foote Hubbard, had married a slaveholding planter and went to live with him on his estate in the West Indies. The brutalities of slavery as she saw it on her husband's plantation, coupled with her horrified discovery that he already had a mulatto family, so wore upon her sensitive nature that her health gave way and she was obliged to leave and return to her own land where she lived with her sister and brother-in-law, Dr. and Mrs. Lyman Beecher. "What she saw and heard of slavery filled her with horror and loathing," said Mrs. Stowe of this aunt in her father's autobiography. "I often heard her say that she frequently sat by her window in the tropical night, when all was still, and wished that the island might sink in the ocean, with all its sin and misery and that she might sink with it."

In a letter to Frederick Douglass, the great Negro orator, written thirty years later when she was consciously gathering material for her book, she said of this time: "I was a child in 1820, when the Missouri question was agitated, and one of the strongest and deepest impressions on my mind was that made by my father's sermons and prayers and the anguish of his soul for the poor slave at that time. I remember his preaching drawing tears down the hardest faces of the old farmers of his congregation. I remember his prayers, morning and evening, in the family for 'poor, oppressed, bleeding Africa,' that the time of her deliverance might come; prayers

offered with strong crying and tears, prayers that indelibly impressed my heart and made me what I am, the enemy of all slavery." The effect of such influences upon the mind of a sensitive and imaginative child may readily be realized.

It was Harriet's own belief that the book which influenced her most, apart from the Bible, was Baxter's *Saints Rest* which she read at the age of thirteen when attending her sister Catharine's Hartford Female Seminary. "As I walked the pavements," she said, "I used to wish that they might sink beneath me if only I might find myself in Heaven."

No event of Harriet's childhood was more directly built into *Uncle Tom's Cabin* than her conversion. When in her old age a stranger congratulated her upon *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, to his stupefaction she denied having written it. And then she added, "The Lord Himself wrote it and I was but the humblest of instruments in his hands." In a letter to her son Charles written in 1886 she described her conversion:

"—Most of father's sermons were as unintelligible to me as if he had spoken in Choctaw. But sometimes he preached what he was accustomed to call a 'frame sermon'; that is a sermon that sprung out of the deep feeling of the occasion and which consequently could be neither premeditated nor repeated. His text was taken from the Gospel of John, the declaration of Jesus: 'Behold, I call you no longer servants but friends.' His theme was Jesus as a soul friend offered to every human being.

"Forgetting all his hair-splitting distinctions and dialectic subtleties, he spoke in direct, simple and tender language of the great love of Christ and his care for the soul. He pictured Him as patient with our errors, compassionate with our weakness and sympathetic for our sorrows. . . .

"I sat intent and absorbed. Oh! how much I needed just such a friend, I thought to myself. . . . My whole soul was illumined with joy and as I left the church to walk home it seemed to me as if Nature herself were hushing her breath to hear the music of Heaven.

"As soon as father came home and was seated in his study I went up to him and fell in his arms saying, 'Father, I have given myself to Jesus and he has taken me.' I never shall forget the expression of his face as he looked down into my earnest childish eyes; it was so sweet, so gentle and like sunlight breaking out upon a landscape. 'Is it so?' he said, holding me silently to his heart, as I felt the hot tears fall on my head. 'Then has a new flower blossomed in the kingdom this day.' "

Soon after this experience Harriet went to her father's intimate friend, Dr. Joel Hawes, the pastor of the First Congregational Church of Hartford, to see him about joining his church. The good old man was alarmed by the child's recital of her simple, easy and happy conversion. He felt about such a get-Heaven-quick method as we feel about a get-rich-quick investment. Apparently the child had had no conviction of sin! As the daughter of his very good friend it was doubly his duty to warn her of her terrible danger.

With an alarming solemnity of manner he said, "Harriet, do you feel that if the universe should be destroyed [ominous pause] you could be happy with God alone?"

After struggling vainly to fix in her mind some concept of what these words meant the alarmed child stammered dutifully, "Yes, sir."

"You realize, I trust," continued the Doctor, "in some measure at least the deceitfulness of your heart and that in punishment for your sins God might justly leave you to make yourself as miserable as you have made yourself sinful?"

Having thus directed the mind of the frightened child into channels of morbid introspection and crushed the ecstasy of her simple Sunday morning conversion, the good, kind-hearted old man dismissed her with a patriarchal benediction. After four years of alternating between belief and doubt, fear, shame and contrition, with the help of her sister, Catharine, and her brother, Edward, she finally emerged into the simple

faith of her childhood conversion—the faith which inspired *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and which thereafter she held to throughout her long life.

It was when Harriet was twenty-one that her father resigned the pastorate of the Hanover Street Church in Boston to take the presidency of Lane Theological Seminary in Cincinnati, Ohio. There she lived during her young womanhood and early married life on the border of the slave state of Kentucky. There she taught in the girls' school established by her sister, Catharine, until she married four years later, Calvin Ellis Stowe. With her friend and fellow-teacher, Mary Dutton, she visited from time to time slaveholding friends on their plantations in Kentucky. When Mary Dutton read *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, twenty years later, she said she was amazed to find woven into the text of the story, scenes, incidents and persons met with during these fleeting visits of two decades before. She was particularly surprised because Harriet at the time had seemed dreamy, abstracted and oblivious of what was going on about her. It was, in fact, from her much admired Kentucky planter friends that she drew her material for the picturesque, romantic and patriarchal side of slavery pictured on the Shelby plantation in the opening chapters of the book.

It was also in Cincinnati that she learned something of the brutal and sinister phase of slavery which must have reawakened the impressions she had gained as a child from her aunt, Mary Hubbard, the wife of the West Indian slaveholder. Her brother, Charles, when he had been driven to despair and fatalism by his unsuccessful efforts to believe the relentless doctrines of Calvinistic theology, and had given up for the time being all thought of going into the ministry, took a position as a clerk for a cotton factor in New Orleans who did business with the Red River plantations. These were the so-called "down the river" plantations which were the nightmare dread of every slave, as well they might have been. The

malarial swamps among which these plantations were located made them so unhealthful that few of their owners lived upon them, but left them to the mercy of overseers. Since human life was, under the most favorable conditions, so brief and uncertain in this fatal climate, there grew up, more or less unconsciously, the feeling that it was more profitable to work the slaves to death in a brief time than it was to give them the degree of humane treatment which under normal conditions was regarded as good business policy. Since the owners were seldom present to be harrowed by the misery which this practise necessitated, it was possible for it to continue unchecked.

Charles Beecher, in going on business for his employer from New Orleans to St. Louis, actually met the Legree of real life—a Yankee from New England—and saw him double up his fist and say: “ ‘Well, I tell ye this yer fist has got hard as iron knocking down niggers. I never see the nigger yet I couldn’t bring down with one crack.’ ” And later he added: “ ‘You see, I just put ’em straight through sick or well. When one nigger’s dead, I buy another; and I find it comes cheaper and easier, every way.’ ” These remarks Charles Beecher took down by a kind of shorthand which he had devised and sent to his sister, Harriet, when some years later, she asked him to furnish her all possible first-hand information about slavery. Yes, Legree was drawn from life more exactly than any other character. That is perhaps the very reason why he has so often been criticized as unreal and exaggerated.

A wealthy and cultivated family came from Louisiana and settled near Cincinnati. They brought with them a number of slaves whom they liberated. Among these was a little Jim Crow girl who was the original of Topsy. It was in her efforts to give this small savage some rudimentary religious instruction in a little mission Sunday-School that Mrs. Stowe got the material for the dialogue between Miss Ophelia and Topsy.

" 'Have you ever heard anything about God, Topsy?'

"The child looked bewildered but grinned as usual.

" 'Do you know who made you?'

" 'Nobody as I knows on,' said the child with a short laugh.

"The idea appeared to amuse her considerably for her eyes twinkled and she added:

" 'I 'spect I grow'd, nobody never made me.' "

In this same little school was a small mulatto boy who would have been sold at auction in connection with the settlement of an estate had not Mrs. Stowe raised the money to purchase his freedom. Although his parents were free he had been born while they were slaves and hence belonged to the estate of their former master. The agony of the parents until the boy was free brought home to Mrs. Stowe this aspect of slavery as nothing else could.

Mrs. Stowe had in her Cincinnati household as a servant a young mulatto woman whose small boy was the "little Harry" of the story. One day she came to Mrs. Stowe trembling with fear to say that her old master was in the city looking for her to drag her back to slavery. As she was a freedwoman this he could not legally do, but Mrs. Stowe well knew that there were illegal ways by which he could accomplish his purpose.

That very night, dark and stormy though it was, Professor Stowe and his brother-in-law, Charles,<sup>1</sup> then a student in the seminary, took the woman and her child in the family carriage and drove them to the house of John Van Sant who ran one of the stations of what was called the Underground Railway. These were the houses of persons who were known to be willing to shelter runaway slaves on their way to the free soil of Canada. Van Sant had been a slave-owner in Ken-

<sup>1</sup>It had been supposed and stated that Henry Ward Beecher aided Professor Stowe in this rescue, but a journal of Charles Beecher, which has recently come to light, shows that it was he. He also furnished his sister with the originals for St. Clare and his household, including Miss Ophelia.

tucky, who, becoming convinced of the iniquity of the system, freed his slaves and moved into Ohio. He was the original of John Van Trompe in the ninth chapter of the book.

As they drove up to the little house, Van Sant came to the door with a lighted candle which he shielded from the wind with his immense palm.

Professor Stowe called out, "Are you the man who will shelter a poor woman and her child from slave-catchers?"

"I rather think I am," answered the big fellow.

"I thought so," exclaimed Professor Stowe, as he helped the woman and her child out of the carriage.

So character after character and scene after scene of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* may be traced to the actual persons and events that inspired them years before the faintest notion of writing such a book had entered Mrs. Stowe's head.

When in 1911, on the centenary of Harriet Beecher Stowe's birth, my father, Charles Edward Stowe, and I published our book entitled *Harriet Beecher Stowe: The Story of Her Life*, we received a letter from Van Sant's son, telling us that his father, as a result of his efforts in behalf of runaway slaves, was eventually arrested, tried and convicted, and fined so heavily as to be a ruined man for the remainder of his life.

In 1850 Professor Stowe was offered and accepted a chair in Bowdoin College at Brunswick, Maine, his alma mater. As he could not leave Lane until his successor was secured his wife with three of the five children and their meager household possessions had to make the long and wearisome journey from Cincinnati to Brunswick without his assistance.

A few months before Mrs. Stowe had experienced one of the greatest tragedies and sorrows of her life. A scourge of cholera had swept over the city. People fell dead in the streets. One hundred and twenty deaths in a day became no unusual record. Finally her baby, Samuel Charles, was smitten and taken. To her husband who had broken down and gone to a water cure at Brattleboro, Vermont, she wrote: "At

last it is over and our little one is gone from us. He is now among the blessed. My Charley, my beautiful, loving, glad-some baby, so loving, so sweet, so full of life and strength—now lies shrouded, pale and cold in the room below. I write as if there were no sorrow like my sorrow, yet there has been in this city, as in the land of Egypt, scarce a house without its dead." And in a later comment on this tragedy she said: "In those depths of sorrow which seemed to me immeasurable it was my only prayer to God that such anguish might not be suffered in vain. I felt that I could never be consoled for it unless this crushing of my own heart might enable me to work out some great good to others." This was her invariable reaction to sorrow—she must somehow turn it to account for the good of others.

Mrs. Stowe and her children broke their journey from Cincinnati to Brunswick by a stop of a few days in Boston at the house of her brother, Edward Beecher, who was there as the minister of the Salem Street Church. The whole town was seething with excitement over the Fugitive Slave Bill which was then under debate in Congress—that bill which required every resident of the United States not only to refuse aid to runaway slaves, but to give every assistance to their masters or alleged masters to recapture them and take them back to slavery.

On arriving in Brunswick Mrs. Stowe, with little support except from her faithful Anna—a combination friend and servant usual in that day—had to get a deserted dreary damp old New England house into livable condition.

In a letter to her sister-in-law, Mrs. George Beecher, she described the settling process:

"‘Mrs. Stowe, how shall I make this lounge and what shall I cover the back with first?’

“Mrs. Stowe: ‘With the coarse cotton in the closet.’

“Woman: ‘Mrs. Stowe, there isn’t any more soap to clean the windows.’

"Mrs. Stowe: 'Here H. run up to the store and get two bars of soap.'

"There is a man wants to see Mrs. Stowe about the cistern. Before you go down, Mrs. Stowe, just show me how to cover this round end of the lounge.'

"There's a man up from the depot, and he says that a box has come for Mrs. Stowe and it's coming up to the house; will you come down and see about it?"

"Mrs. Stowe, don't go till you have shown the man how to nail that carpet in the corner. He's nailed it all crooked; what shall he do? The black thread is all used up and what shall I do about putting gimp on the back of that sofa? Mrs. Stowe, there is a man come with a lot of pails and tinware from Furbish; will you settle the bill now?" etc. etc.—

"Then comes a letter from my husband saying he is sick abed and all but dead; don't ever expect to see his family again; wants to know how I shall manage in case I am left a widow; knows we shall get in debt and never get out; wonders at my courage; thinks I am very sanguine; warns me to be prudent as there won't be much to live on in case of his death, etc., etc., etc. I read the letter and poke it into the stove and proceed. . . ."

She recognized that the letter was merely an emanation of one of her husband's black moods and refused to take it seriously.

Mrs. Stowe went on to describe her difficulties with her kitchen sink which, as she said, had "no water privileges." It was the primitive custom of the time to catch rain water in cisterns and then pump it up into the sink from the cellar. She bought two great oil hogsheads for the purpose but when they arrived it was found that the cellar door "was truly a strait and narrow way" through which the hogsheads could not enter. "In the days of chivalry," she commented, "I might have got a knight to make me a breach through the foundation walls but that was not to be thought of now. . . . In this strait I fell upon a real honest Yankee cooper whom I besought, for the reputation of his craft and mine,

to take my hogsheads to pieces, carry them down in staves, and set them up again, which the worthy man actually accomplished. . . . Prof. Smith came down and looked very hard at them [the hogsheads] and then said, 'Well, nothing can beat a willful woman.'"

In the midst of these domestic struggles she received a letter from her sister-in-law, Mrs. Edward Beecher, describing some of the scenes of cruelty and barbarity which were then taking place in the "Cradle of Liberty" under the compulsions of the Fugitive Slave Bill which had become a law of the nation. Years later in telling Mrs. Stowe's son, Charles, of this time, Mrs. Beecher wrote, "I had been nourishing an anti-slavery spirit since Lovejoy was murdered for publishing in his paper articles against slavery and intemperance when our home was in Illinois." Mrs. Beecher concluded her letter with these words: "Now, Hattie, if I could use a pen as you can, I would write something that would make this whole nation feel what an accursed thing slavery is!"

Before her marriage Mrs. Stowe had written for pleasure essays, poems and stories and since then she had continued to write in an effort to bridge the gap between her husband's small fixed salary and the mounting expenses of a large family.

In an undated letter,<sup>2</sup> which must have been written between one and two years before the publication of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, and which was evidently in reply to a request to furnish a sketch of her life for a volume of lives of distinguished women, she said in part:

"I was amused, I must say, at your letter to me, wholly innocent as I am of any pretensions to rank among 'distinguished women.' The idea of the daguerreotype especially was quite droll and I diverted myself somewhat with figuring the astonishment of the children should the

<sup>2</sup> Now in the Henry E. Huntington Library.

well-known visage of their mother loom out of the pages of a book before their astonished eyes. But in sober sadness—having reflected duly and truly on my past life, it is so thoroughly uneventful and uninteresting that I do not see how anything can be done for me in the way of a sketch. My sister, Catharine, has lived much more of a life and done more that can be told of than I whose course and employments have always been retired and domestic. The most I can think of is that I was born in Litchfield, Ct.—was a teacher from my fifteenth year till my marriage, that I have been mother to seven children—six of them are now living—and that the greatest portion of my time and strength has been spent in the necessary but unpoetic duties of the family."

In a postscript she added, "In answer to one of your inquiries I would say that I have never published but one book, '*The Mayflower*' by Harpers."

To revert to the letter from Mrs. Edward Beecher, that Mrs. Stowe read to her children, gathered together in the little front parlor, when she came to the words, "I would write something that would make this whole nation feel what an accursed thing slavery is!" rising from her chair and crushing the letter in her hand, she exclaimed, with an expression on her face which made an indelible impression on the minds of her children, "God helping me, I will write something. I will if I live!"

In a letter to her brother written a few weeks later she said: "Tell sister Isabel that I thank her for her letter and will answer. As long as the baby sleeps with me nights I can't do much at anything, but I will do it at last. I will write that thing if I live." My father was the baby who thus inconsiderately postponed the writing of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

Not long after this Mrs. Stowe returned to the home of the Edward Beechers in Boston. While there she met the Reverend Josiah Henson, a freedman Negro preacher. She heard his story of his escape from slavery. He remembered seeing

*Afumé de odo*





In this house in Brunswick, Maine, during the years 1851 and 1852, Harriet Beecher Stowe wrote "Uncle Tom's Cabin."

his father lying on the ground bruised, bleeding and dying from the blows of an overseer because, mere slave and nigger though he was, he had dared to pretend that the mother of his children was his wife and had tried to defend her against an assault which this overseer had made upon her person. What particularly struck her was the sweet Christlike spirit of the man even in recalling injuries calculated to arouse in anybody a spirit of vindictive fury. He became more than any other one person the "Uncle Tom" of the book.

In 1930 the grave of Reverend Josiah Henson in Dresden, Ontario, Canada, was cleared of the tangled growth which had covered it and it has become a place of pilgrimage for tourists. Mrs. Maxwell D. Fraser, of London, Ontario, sent me a copy of a letter which Mrs. Stowe wrote to her father, the Reverend W. H. Gilley, endorsing Henson as a "noble black man," stating that she drew "many of the finest conceptions and incidents of Uncle Tom's character" from Henson's life and telling of a visit he paid her in Andover, after the publication of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, which "confirmed the high esteem I had for him."

Shortly after this visit to Boston Mrs. Stowe was seated in her pew<sup>3</sup> in the Parish Church of Brunswick during a communion service. Her children were with her but her husband was away lecturing. Suddenly, like the unrolling of a picture scroll as she described it, the death of Uncle Tom passed before her mind's eye—the scene where he is beaten to death by Sambo and Quimbo, the black slave-drivers acting under the orders of Legree. She saw the victory of the poor bleeding black man as he turned his physical defeat into a spiritual triumph. At the same time the words of Jesus sounded in her ears, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." It seemed as if the crucified but now arisen and glorified Christ were

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<sup>3</sup>This pew—number 23—is now marked by a tablet in the First Parish Church of Brunswick.

speaking to her through the dying black man, cut and bleeding under the blows of the slave whip. So affected was she by what she saw and heard that she could scarcely keep from sobbing aloud.

That afternoon she went to her room, locked the door, and wrote out what she had seen, practically as it stands to-day in the chapter called, "The Martyr." As sufficient writing-paper was not at hand, she wrote much of it on brown wrapping paper in which groceries had been delivered. It seemed to her as if what she wrote was blown through her mind as with the rushing of a mighty wind. In the evening she again gathered the children together in the little front parlor and read them what she had written. When she had finished they were all crying and one of the little boys sobbed, "Oh, Ma, slavery is the most cruel thing in the world!"

But so pressed was Mrs. Stowe by domestic cares and duties that she laid to one side and apparently forgot what she had written. When her husband returned she didn't even read it to him. One day she found him weeping over the pieces of brown paper which he had come upon by accident in a table drawer. He looked up at her through his tears and exclaimed, "Hattie, this is the climax of that story of slavery which you promised sister Isabel you would write. Begin at the beginning and work up to this and you'll have your book."

Some weeks slipped by before Mrs. Stowe actually began to act upon her husband's advice. As a matter of fact neither she nor he realized that she had done anything of importance. She was so accustomed to have her emotional husband water with his tears her literary efforts that that was no unusual portent. In the meantime she wrote Gamaliel Bailey, editor of the *National Era*, an Abolition paper published in Washington, D. C., telling him that she was planning a story to be called, *Uncle Tom's Cabin, or Life among the Lowly*, and asking whether it would interest him as a serial?

*Uncle Tom's Cabin* began as a serial in the *National Era*

## THE BUILDING OF UNCLE TOM'S CABIN 183

in June, 1851; and, although announced to run for but three months, did not conclude until April, 1852. The book was published a month before the serial stopped. Mr. Bailey paid her three hundred dollars. In spite of its power the story was not altogether satisfactory to his readers. They were, of course, Simon-pure Abolitionists to whom slavery was the blackest of sins and every slaveholder a sinner. This story deliberately played up the picturesque and patriarchal side of slavery and showed masters and mistresses who were almost as fond of their slaves and as solicitous for their welfare as if they were their children. Of Uncle Tom's three masters the two who were kind Christian gentlemen were southerners while the brutal, bestial villain was a Yankee from New England. If slavery was the greatest of all sins, as William Lloyd Garrison and the Abolitionists called it, how could good Christian gentlemen practise it? That was confusing and gave the Abolitionist readers food for thought which they resented just as people always resent being forced to think.

While the story was running as a serial, John P. Jewett, of Boston, a young publisher and a predecessor of the present house of Houghton Mifflin Company, made overtures for its publication in book form. He offered Mrs. Stowe either a straight ten-per-cent. royalty on every copy sold or a fifty-fifty division of profits or losses. Mrs. Stowe knew nothing about business and the Professor knew, if possible, less. So they turned for advice, as was their custom in all worldly matters, to their friend, the Honorable Philip Greeley, a former Collector of the Port of Boston and then a member of Congress. On reading Mr. Jewett's letter Greeley commented: "Why, Calvin, there is really no choice here. You and Hattie have no money to gamble with. Take the ten per cent. There's no risk in that! After all what is a novel? Even if successful it's merely a flash in the pan and then it's all over—especially a novel on an unpopular subject and by a woman! You tell Hattie that if she makes enough out of it

to buy a new black silk dress I shall consider her very fortunate." This advice the Congressman gave without taking the trouble to read the story. The advice was accepted and the contract signed on the ten-per-cent. basis in March, 1852.

Before the story concluded as a serial, the publisher wrote the author warning her that she was making it too long for one volume. He pointed out that the subject was unpopular, and that while one volume might have a reasonable sale, two volumes might prove fatal to the success of the enterprise. Mrs. Stowe replied that she did not make the story, that the Lord made it, and that she could not stop it until it was done. It was, in fact, first published in two volumes. Mrs. Stowe and the Lord had their way and not the publisher.

Doctor Stowe took the so-called first copy off the press and presented it to Congressman Greeley at the depot just as he was leaving for the Capitol. Greeley began to read it shortly after the train pulled out of the station and before long tears gathered in his eyes and fell to the pages of the book. He was chagrined that he, a leading citizen of Boston and member of Congress, should find himself shedding tears in public over a novel—a novel, too, written by a woman! To save his self-respect he left the train at Springfield, Massachusetts, and went to a hotel for the night. Here he finished the book in the early hours of the morning, and shed his tears in the decent privacy of his room. Apparently most of the early readers of the novel swam in pools of tears like Alice in *Alice in Wonderland*. It was a day of ready tears. Some of us heirs have wished that the Congressman might have seen fit to shed his tears before he gave his advice. Had Mrs. Stowe received half the profits on *Uncle Tom's Cabin* even her impracticality and generosity could hardly have prevented her from making a large fortune.

Three thousand copies were sold the first day and three hundred thousand within the year. Eight power presses running day and night could barely keep pace with the demand. One

and one-half million copies were sold in Great Britain and the Colonies during the year. Although Mrs. Stowe had no foreign copyright, since the law making that possible was not passed until four years later and so received on the British sales complimentary voluntary payments only, nevertheless her receipts for the first three months were ten thousand dollars. During these early months the book went by acclamation even in the South.<sup>4</sup> A friend who had a wide acquaintance in the Southern States wrote her, "Your book is going to be the great pacifier; it will unite North and South."

This initial acceptance of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in the South may be traced to the same characteristics which made it relatively unacceptable in the *National Era*; namely to the fact that it depicted both sides of the institution of slavery—the picturesque and patriarchal as well as the cruel and sinister. This was the first time that literature, emanating from an anti-slavery source, had even attempted fairly to present the good in slavery as well as the bad. Some of Mrs. Stowe's friends among slaveholders had been so impressed by the evils of the system that they had actually liberated their slaves at great personal sacrifice. This had led her to the belief that could the institution be dramatized, many slave-owners, formerly blinded to its evils because of their nearness to them, would have their eyes opened and become themselves leaders in its abolition. She knew, too, that many of the greatest southerners from Washington and Jefferson up to that time had been opposed to slavery. She was, in fact, in touch with a number of such southerners among whom was Daniel R. Goodloe, of North Carolina. In a letter<sup>5</sup> to him written the year after the publication of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* she said:

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<sup>4</sup>I estimate that the total sale of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* has been between six and seven million copies—although my estimate is hardly more than a guess.

<sup>5</sup>Printed in an article called "Anti-Slavery Sentiment in the South," by Dr. Stephen B. Weeks, in the *Publications of the Southern History Association*.

"I respect and admire the true, chivalric, noble ideal of the southern man, and therefore more indignantly repudiate all that is no part of him, being the result of an unnatural institution, and which is unworthy of him and therein, I think, show myself more fully a friend than those who undertake to defend faults and all. . . . I cannot hope to be regarded as a friend and must comfort myself with the simple pleasure of feeling friendly."

She had never been willing to join the Abolition party because she disapproved their violent methods. Like her father and her brothers and sisters, although intensely anti-slavery, she was not an Abolitionist. She agreed with her father that the Abolitionists "were like men who would burn down their houses to get rid of the rats."

Mrs. Stowe's ingenuous hopes to raise up southern anti-slavery leaders were soon dashed. Discords were soon heard amid the chorus of praise. The attacks appeared in two papers as widely separated geographically and otherwise as the *London Times* and the *New York Observer*, a religious paper. The *London Times'* review, after admitting that *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was a skilful and powerful book, in spite of Uncle Tom's impossible perfection and other incredibilities, commented, "Its object is to abolish slavery. Its effect will be to render slavery more difficult than ever of abolition. . . ." and concluded, ". . . Let us have no more 'Uncle Tom's Cabins' engendering ill will, keeping up bad blood and rendering well disposed, humane but critically placed men their own enemies, and the stumbling blocks to civilization and to the spread of the glad tidings from Heaven." It must have given Mrs. Stowe a start to learn that she was accused of preventing "well-disposed" men from "spreading the glad tidings from Heaven." The *Times* approved colonization in Liberia as the solution of the slavery problem best calculated to "spread the glad tidings from Heaven." If these accusations were startling to Mrs. Stowe



Harriet Beecher Stowe as her friends knew her in the Fifties.

Slowly the many despatched creatures onward  
their way into the room & with croaking voices  
these presented their baskets to be "weighed"

Signs note on a slate on the side  
was pasted a list of names, the result

Jones basket was weighed & approved  
& he looked with an air

of the woman he had informed

"Gathering with meekness she came  
& delivered her basket - it was of full weight as  
Signs who perceives her affecting anger he said

"What you born beast! short again! stand aside  
you catch it 'pretty close'

The woman gather despair  
& sat down bairn

The person who had been called Cassy  
now ca. forward & with a heavy bright  
is her basket As she delivered it  
she looks in her eyes with a scowling yet  
I give my glance

her black eyes steadily  
& him, her lips moved slightly & she said  
something in French what she  
knew but Ieg

what must have been those which appeared three weeks later in the *New York Observer*: "We have read the book," said the editors of the *Observer* reassuringly, "and regard it as anti-Christian. . . . We have marked numerous passages in which religion is spoken of in terms of contempt. . . ." (Unhappily they omit to give these passages.) The editors assert further: ". . . Mrs. Stowe labors through all her book to render ministers odious and contemptible by attributing to them sentiments unworthy of men or Christians." What a singular effort for a woman who was not only the daughter of a minister but the sister of seven ministers and yet no one ever accused the *New York Observer* of being a humorous paper! Both these articles were copied with ecstasy by the southern press. At the Vatican "it was placed upon the Index . . . as being subversive of established authority."<sup>56</sup>

Henry Pellew, a young Englishman, fresh from Cambridge, made a tour of the United States in 1854. In Charleston, South Carolina, he met a planter who invited him to come and pay him a long visit on his neighboring plantation. He accepted. He soon became a favorite in his host's social set and was included in all their activities such as dinners, hunts and dances. One night at a dinner the attractive young daughter of the house next whom he sat, asked him if he had read a recently published book written by a New England woman fiercely attacking slavery and slaveholders. She thought it was called Uncle something or another. Pellew replied that he had heard of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* in England and had read it in Boston. The young woman said she wished immensely to read it but had been unable to get a copy. If he would lend her his she would be most grateful. He explained that he had left his copy in Boston but would be glad to get her one the next time he went to Charleston.

<sup>56</sup> *Chronicles of America*, Vol. 24, Chapter IX, by Bliss Perry.

The next day he went into a Charleston bookstore and asked for a copy of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. The clerk stared at him in speechless amazement and rushed for the proprietor who said severely, "No, Sir, we carry no such book in this house!" After one or more similar rebuffs in other shops he came upon a more sympathetic bookseller who asked how he happened to be looking for such a book in Charleston? When he had explained the circumstances the man told him that if he would go to a certain old yellow house with green blinds and ring the back door-bell he might find what he wanted. He finally found in a shabby section of the city the old yellow house with green blinds. An apprehensive little man answered to his ring who after pledging him to secrecy stealthily sold him a second-hand paper-bound copy of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* for five dollars. On his way home he left this bootleg book with his card at the house of the young lady and thought no more about it.

A few days later a group of young planters whom he had met rode over to see him and told him that he was in serious trouble. The young girl to whom he gave the copy of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* had told how she got it. A committee of planters were about to wait upon him and demand that he leave the state at once never to return. Also some young hot-heads were proposing to challenge him to fight a duel with pistols for daring to give such a book to a southern lady. Thanking his informants, Pellew packed his clothes, bade his host good-by and left for South America before the committee arrived. In his old age he returned to England to succeed to the title and estates of the Earl of Exmouth. His son, the present Earl, told me this story.

Mrs. Stowe sent early copies of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* with letters to leading Englishmen whom she knew to be interested in the anti-slavery cause. Among these were Prince Albert, the Duke of Argyll, the Earls of Carlisle and Shaftesbury, Lord Macaulay and Charles Dickens. This she did in part because

there seemed at the time to be some danger that Canada might be closed to slaves as a refuge.

Prince Albert not only read his copy but got his wife, the Queen, to read it with incalculable results. Lord Carlisle wrote the Preface for an early British edition, while Lord Macaulay reviewed it. "If I might suggest a fault in what has so charmed me," wrote Dickens, "it would be that you go too far and seek to prove too much." Heine reviewed it in Germany and George Sand in France.

"It has faults," said George Sand, "we need not pass them in silence, we need not evade the discussion of them—but you need not be disturbed about them, you who are rallied on the tears you have shed over the fortunes of the poor victims in a narrative so simple and true."

"These defects exist only in relation to the conventional rules of art which never have been and never will be absolute. If its judges, possessed with the love of what they call 'artistic work,' find unskilled treatment in the book, look well at them to see if their eyes are dry when they are reading this or that chapter. . . . She has genius as humanity feels the need of genius—the genius of goodness, not that of the man of letters, but that of the saint. . . ."

Those who should know<sup>7</sup> have said that the play, *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, has had the "longest run in history." Mrs. Stowe received nothing from "the longest run in history." She had no dramatic rights. Indeed, she could have had none because our copyright laws—then as now fifty years behind the times—did not permit an author until 1870 to reserve the right of dramatization. Her only tangible reward from the dramatization of her book was a box when the play came to Hartford. She invited her neighbor, Charles Dudley Warner, to go as her

<sup>7</sup> Appendix, p. 400.

escort. He always said afterward that she couldn't follow the plot—that he had to explain it to her.

It is sometimes said that Harriet Beecher Stowe, when she lived in the South after the war and came to know what fine people the southern whites were and how shiftless and worthless the Negroes, expressed regret that she had ever written *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. She exploded that falsehood in a letter written from Hartford in 1887 to a friend in Jacksonville, Illinois, the seat of Illinois College:<sup>8</sup>

“It is a vile slander to say that I ever in any shape or form took back the things I said in ‘Uncle Tom’s Cabin.’ I did not find the Southern Negroes ‘degraded, ignorant and shiftless,’ but considering their advantages far better than many white people. Please assert these things boldly on my authority.”

*Uncle Tom's Cabin* found its way in a surprisingly short time to almost every land. It was translated into thirty-seven languages, including some dialects. The modest and obscure little woman who wrote it, who only a few months before had protested that she had no “pretensions” to be numbered among “distinguished women,” became an international figure—the focal point of a dazzling world-wide fame.

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<sup>8</sup> Now in the possession of the Illinois College Library.

## CHAPTER XIII

### HARRIET BEECHER STOWE

#### THE FAMOUS

SOME idea of the effect of the sudden transition from obscurity to fame upon Mrs. Stowe herself may be gathered from a letter she wrote Mrs. Follen, of England, herself a writer:

“So you want to know something about what sort of a woman I am! Well, if this is any object, you shall have statistics free of charge. To begin, then, I am a little bit of a woman—somewhat more than forty, about as thin and dry as a pinch of snuff; never very much to look at in my best days and looking like a used-up article now.”

A shrewd woman once remarked that Mrs. Stowe never would have so described herself had she not been a good-looking woman. However that may be, this whimsical description is very characteristic both of her sense of fun and her sense of the dramatic. She saw the humor in every situation and she dramatized instinctively everything including herself. The smaller and plainer and humbler she could now make herself the more dramatic and amusing would be the effect against the background of her prodigious fame.

Fearing that the powerful southern propaganda which was representing *Uncle Tom's Cabin* as “a tissue of lies”<sup>1</sup> might weaken its influence, Mrs. Stowe started at once to support it with facts drawn from laws, codes, court records, southern newspapers and private papers. This compilation she called, *A Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Hearing that the Duchess of

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<sup>1</sup>Several books were published to refute it; one being called, *Life at the South; or Uncle Tom's Cabin As It Is*, by W. L. G. Smith.

Sutherland was heading an appeal from the women of Great Britain to the women of America against slavery she wrote her of this "Key":

"It is made up of the facts, the documents, the things which my own eyes have looked upon and my hands have handled, that attest this awful indictment upon my country. I write it in the anguish of my soul, with tears and prayer, with sleepless nights and weary days. I bear testimony with a heavy heart as one who in court is forced by an awful oath to disclose the sins of those dearest."

She finished this grueling task in April of 1853 when she sailed for England with her husband and her brother, Charles, to accept the invitation of the Anti-Slavery Society of Glasgow to make a tour in the British Isles in behalf of the anti-slavery cause. In a letter to her children mailed soon after landing at Liverpool she wrote:

"I had an early opportunity of making acquaintance with my English brethren, for, much to my astonishment, I found quite a crowd on the wharf, and we walked to our carriage through a long lane of people, bowing and looking very glad to see us.

"When I came to get into the hack it was surrounded by more faces than I could count. They stood very quietly and looked very kindly, though evidently very much determined to look. . . ."

"It seems so odd and dream-like that so many persons desire to see me," she later remarked.

After a great meeting in Liverpool she went to Glasgow.

"In the afternoon I rode out with the lord provost to see the cathedral. . . . As I saw the way to the cathedral blocked up by a throng of people who had come out to see me I could not help saying, 'What went ye out to see? A reed shaken by the wind?' In fact I was

so worn out that I could hardly walk through the building. The next morning I was so ill as to need a physician, unable to see anyone that called or to hear any of the letters. I passed most of the day in bed but in the evening I got up as I had engaged to drink tea with two thousand people."

Near the ruins of the castle where Robert Bruce died

"I was presented, by his own request," said Mrs. Stowe, "to a broad-shouldered Scotch farmer who stood some six feet two and who paid me the compliment to say that he had read my book and that he would walk six miles to see me any day. Such a flattering evidence of discriminating taste, of course, disposed my heart towards him, but when I went up and put my hand into his great prairie of a palm, I was a grasshopper in my own eyes. I inquired who he was and was told he was one of the Duke of Argyll's farmers. I thought to myself if all the duke's farmers were of this pattern, that he might be able to speak to the enemy in the gates to some purpose. . . .

"We rode through several villages after this and everywhere a warm welcome. What pleased me was that it was not mainly from the literary, nor the rich, nor the great but the plain, common people. The butcher came out of his stall and the baker from his shop, the miller dusty with flour, the blooming comely young mother, with that hearty, intelligent, friendly look as if they knew we should be glad to see them."

That the common people should welcome the author of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was natural enough. While it is one of the comparatively few books that were read alike in the parlor and the kitchen—the common people have always felt instinctively that it was peculiarly their book.

The next stop was Edinburgh where, said Mrs. Stowe:

"We drove . . . up to the castle, to the university, to Holyrood, to the hospitals and through many of the principal streets amid shouts and smiles and greetings.

Some boys amused me very much by their pertinacious attempts to keep up with the carriage.

"'Heck,' says one of them, 'that's her; see the courls!'

"The various engravers who have amused themselves by diversifying my face for the public having all, with great unanimity, agreed in giving prominence to this point, I suppose the urchins thought they were on safe ground there. I certainly think I answered one good purpose that day and that is of giving the much oppressed and calumniated class called boys an opportunity to develop all the noise that was in them—a thing for which I think they must bless me in their remembrances."

"As to all my engagements," she commented, "I am in a state of happy acquiescence, having resigned myself, as a very tame lion, into the hands of my keepers. Whenever the time comes for me to do anything I try to behave as well as I can, which, as Dr. Young says, is all an angel could do under the same circumstances."

"Never did lioness roar so softly," remarked Mrs. Elizabeth Barrett Browning.

At the Edinburgh meeting Mrs. Stowe was given a thousand golden sovereigns on a huge silver salver<sup>2</sup> to be used for the benefit of the slaves. It was known as the national penny offering and many of the contributors were the very poor to whom their penny contribution meant a sacrifice. One old blind woman said to a member of the committee, "If I cannot read, my son has read it to me, and I've got my penny saved to give."

After similar ovations in Aberdeen, Dundee and Birmingham Mrs. Stowe and her party arrived in London just in time to attend a lord mayor's dinner, where she sat beside Lord Chief Baron Pollock who was much interested in the legal portions of the *Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin* which he had just read. Charles Dickens sat opposite and Mrs. Stowe was surprised

<sup>2</sup>Now on loan with the Brooklyn Museum, Brooklyn, New York.

to find him looking so young. When it came time for the lord mayor to leave for the House of Commons some one suggested to Mrs. Stowe that they go with him and make a night of it. "With all my heart," she replied, "if I only had another body to go into tomorrow." At another time she remarked, "How convenient it would be in sightseeing if we could change our bodies as we change our clothes."

"The general topic of remark on meeting me seems to be," said she in describing an evening reception, "that I am not so bad looking as they were afraid I was; and I do assure you that when I have seen the things that are put up in the shop windows here with my name under them, I have been in wondering admiration at the boundless loving-kindness of my English and Scottish friends in keeping up such a warm heart for such a Gorgon."

A few days later the Duke and Duchess of Sutherland gave Mrs. Stowe a great reception at Stafford House (now the London Museum) at which the Duchess presented her with a gold bracelet<sup>a</sup> made in the form of a slave's shackle and with the inscription, "We trust it is a memorial of a chain that is soon to be broken." On two of the links were inscribed the dates of the abolition of the slave trade and of slavery on British territory. Years later Mrs. Stowe had the satisfaction of adding on another link the date of the Constitutional Amendment abolishing slavery in the United States.

In commenting on the many famous persons who were present on this occasion, among whom were the Duke and Duchess of Argyll, Lord Shaftesbury, Lord and Lady Palmerston, Lord John Russell, Lord Granville, Mr. Gladstone, Archbishop Whately and Lord Macaulay, Mrs. Stowe said, "One has a strange mythological feeling about the existence of people of whom one hears for many years without ever seeing them. While talking with Lord Palmerston I could but remember how

<sup>a</sup> Now in the possession of Mrs. Stowe's great-grandson, Henry Freeman Allen.

often I had heard father and Mr. S. exulting over his foreign dispatches by our own fireside." Lord Palmerston told her that he had not read a novel for thirty years, yet he read *Uncle Tom's Cabin* three times, and was particularly impressed by its statesmanship.

In connection with a visit to Windsor Castle Professor and Mrs. Stowe stopped at what they thought to be the graveyard in which Gray wrote his "Elegy in a Country Churchyard" and there they recited the "Elegy" with fitting emotions. "Imagine our chagrin," wrote Mrs. Stowe to a sister, "on returning to London at being informed that we had not been to the genuine churchyard after all. The gentleman who wept over the scenes of his early days on the wrong doorstep was not more grievously disappointed. However, he and we could console ourselves with the reflection that the emotion was admirable and only wanted the right place to make it the most appropriate in the world."

The most important event of Mrs. Stowe's remaining days in England, before going to France, was meeting Lady Byron at a lunch, with whom she had "a few moments of deeply interesting conversation. No engravings that ever have been circulated in America do any justice to her appearance. She is of slight figure, formed with exceeding delicacy and her whole form, face, dress and air unite to make an impression of a character singularly dignified, gentle, pure and yet strong."

After one more ceremony at which the ladies of Surrey Chapel presented her with a large silver inkstand<sup>4</sup> Mrs. Stowe escaped to the continent. "Tomorrow we go—go to quiet, to obscurity, to peace—to Paris, to Switzerland," she wrote.

In Paris Mrs. Stowe's portrait was painted by Monsieur Hilaire Belloc whose wife had made the best French translation of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. They were the grandparents of Hilaire Belloc and his sister, Marie Belloc-Lowndes. Monsieur

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<sup>4</sup>Now in the possession of the writer and used in writing this book.

Belloc said he believed the phenomenal success of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was "because there was in it more genuine faith than in any book."

Of the trip from Paris to Geneva, Charles Beecher wrote:

"The people of the neighborhood, having discovered who Harriet was . . . it was Scotland over again. We have had to be unflinching to prevent her being overwhelmed. . . . It was touching to listen to the talk of these secluded mountaineers. . . . All had read 'Uncle Tom', and it had apparently been an era in their life's monotony, for they said, 'Oh, madam, do write another! Remember our winter nights here are very long!'"

At length Mrs. Stowe and her brother returned to England to embark for home. Doctor Stowe had already sailed.

Just before she sailed from Liverpool a delegation from Belfast, Ireland, presented her with a casket made of bog-oak, lined with gold, which contained Ireland's offering for the slaves.

"Thus, almost sadly as a child might leave its home," she exclaimed, "I left the shores of kind, strong Old England—the mother of us all."

The anti-slavery leader, Cassius M. Clay, commented on Mrs. Stowe's tour, more particularly the Stafford House demonstration, "It will help our cause by rendering it fashionable." A little unsophisticated Yankee woman who knew nothing of Society, which was then taken seriously, had made the anti-slavery cause fashionable!

Hardly had Mrs. Stowe unpacked her trunks on her return before she was deeply involved with her brother, Henry Ward, and her nephew, Edward Everett Hale, in the Kansas and Nebraska agitation. Finally she wrote and circulated in vast numbers an appeal to the women of America, which opened: "The Providence of God has brought our nation to a crisis of

most solemn interest" and concluded, "For the sake, then, of our dear children, for the sake of our common country, for the sake of outraged and struggling liberty throughout the world, let every woman of America now do her duty." Here was Harriet at last issuing a "declaration on her own account." The Beecher sense of a family mission was by now fully developed and that, together with her own epoch-making achievement with *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, had undoubtedly given Mrs. Stowe a feeling, despite her very genuine modesty, that she was an instrument of Providence for the aid and guidance of her fellow-beings.

Not long after this she received the appeal for the slaves from the women of Great Britain to the women of America headed by the Duchess of Sutherland. This protest against slavery, was signed by British women in all parts of the Empire who ranged in rank and position from Duchesses to the wives of common laborers. There were over half a million signatures bound in twenty-six folio volumes.<sup>5</sup>

By 1856 Mrs. Stowe, having finished *Dred*, her second novel of slavery, again went to England—this time for rest and copyright. Just as in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* she had sought to show the evil effects of slavery upon the slaves and upon Negroes generally so in this novel she undertook to expose the demoralizing influence of slavery upon the masters and upon white persons generally.

The English edition of *Dred* sold fifty thousand copies in the first two weeks and one hundred thousand within a month. Many people, including Queen Victoria, liked it better than *Uncle Tom*. Harriet Martineau expressed this opinion in a letter urging Mrs. Stowe to visit her. Mrs. Stowe soon had opportunity to learn the Queen's opinion at first hand. When she and her husband were on their way to visit the Duke and Duchess of Argyll at Inverary Castle in Scotland they met the

<sup>5</sup>Now in the possession of the Connecticut Historical Society.

Queen by appointment at a railway station. The first-class waiting-room was cleared of other travelers while the Queen received them. Of this experience Professor Stowe wrote to a friend:

" . . . yesterday we had just the very pleasantest little interview with the Queen that ever was. None of the formal, drawing room, breathless receptions, but just an accidental, done-on-purpose meeting at a railway station while on our way to Scotland.

"The Queen seemed really delighted to see my wife and remarkably glad to see me for her sake. She pointed us out to Prince Albert who made two most gracious bows to my wife and two to me while the four royal children stared their big blue eyes almost out looking at the little authoress of 'Uncle Tom's Cabin'."

After the visit to Inverary Doctor Stowe returned to his duties as Professor of Sacred Literature at the Theological Seminary in Andover, Massachusetts, which had been their home since 1853, while Mrs. Stowe, with other members of her family, went first to Paris and later to Italy for the winter with headquarters in Rome.

"The boys in the Faubourg St. Antoine," she wrote from Paris, "are the children of ouvriers and every day their mothers give them two sous to buy a dinner. When they heard I was coming to the school, of their own accord, they subscribed half their dinner money to give to me for the poor slaves. This five franc piece I have now; I have bought it of the cause for five dollars and am going to make a hole in it and hang it around Charley's neck (her seven year old son) as a medal."

"The great trouble with travelling in Europe," she commented in Venice, "or indeed of travelling anywhere is that you can never *catch* romance. . . . But Venice is an exception; it is all romance from beginning to end. . . ."

On returning to England in the spring to sail for home she spent a day with Lady Byron in London and wrote her from Liverpool just before sailing:

"Dear Friend—I left you with a strange sort of yearning throbbing feeling—you make me feel quite as I did years ago, a sort of girlishness quite odd for me. . . . I often think how strange it is that I should *know* you—you who were a sort of legend of my early days—that I should love you is only a natural result. . . ."

Mrs. Stowe returned home to meet one of the greatest and most unexpected tragedies of her life. Her eldest son and favorite child, Henry, who had been with her in Scotland, was drowned in the Connecticut River at Hanover, New Hampshire, where he was a freshman in Dartmouth College.

"While I was visiting in Hanover, where Henry died," she wrote in a letter to the Duchess of Sutherland, "a poor, deaf old slave woman, who has still five children in bondage, came to comfort me. 'Bear up, dear soul,' she said; 'you must bear it, for the Lord loves ye.' She said further, 'Sunday is a heavy day to me, 'cause I can't work and can't hear preaching and can't read so I can't keep my mind off my poor children. Some on 'em the blessed Master's got and they's safe; but, oh, there are five that I don't know where they are.'

"What are our mother sorrows to this! I shall try to search out and redeem these children. . . ."

Shortly after this she said in a letter to her sister Catharine:

"If ever I was conscious of an attack of the devil trying to separate me from the love of Christ it was for some days after the terrible news came. I was in a state of great physical weakness, most agonizing, and unable to control my thoughts. Distressing doubts as to Henry's spiritual state were rudely thrust upon my soul. It was as if a voice had said to me: 'You trusted in God, did

you? You believed that He loved you! You had perfect confidence that He would never take your child till the work of grace was mature! Now, He has hurried him into eternity without a moment's warning, without preparation and where is he?

"I saw at last that these thoughts were irrational and contradicted the calm settled belief of my better moments and that they were dishonorable to God and that it was my duty to resist them and to assume and steadily maintain that Jesus in love had taken my dear one to his bosom. Since then the Enemy has left me in peace. . . ."

How that must have reawakened in Catharine's memory her similar fears for her drowned betrothed over thirty years before! And how it showed the grip of the relentless doctrines of Calvinism upon the subconscious minds of those brought up to believe them long after their conscious minds had discarded them! Her own fresh tragedy and these ancient terrors which it awakened led Mrs. Stowe to relive her sister's tragedy of a generation ago. And this resulted in *The Minister's Wooing*.

While that story was appearing serially in the *Atlantic Monthly*, and before it was finished, James Russell Lowell, the editor, wrote her:

"What especially charmed me in the new story was that you had taken your stand on New England ground. You are one of the few persons lucky enough to be born with eyes in your head—that is, with something behind the eyes which makes them of value. To most people the seeing apparatus is as useless as the great telescope at the observatory is to me—something to stare through with no intelligent result.

"In the first place," he added, "pay no regard to the advice of anybody. In the second place, pay a great deal to mine!"

"Let your moral take care of itself," he concluded, "and remember that an author's writing-desk is something infinitely higher than a pulpit."

Wise but wasted advice! Nobody could persuade a Beecher that anything was higher than a pulpit. Harriet Beecher was just as much a preacher as her father, Lyman Beecher, or her brother, Henry Ward, and her "writing-desk" was her pulpit. One might as hopefully have tried to keep a fish from swimming as a Beecher from preaching. And Harriet like the others was a preacher first and an artist afterward.

*The Minister's Wooing* was an attack on the cruelty and injustice of Calvinism just as *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was an attack on the cruelty and injustice of slavery. In *The Minister's Wooing* she attacked Calvinism without attacking Calvinists just as in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* she attacked slavery without attacking slaveholders. In only one of her major books did she write as an artist with no purpose except to reflect life as she saw it, and that book, *Old Town Folks*, is undoubtedly her best as a work of literary art.

*The Minister's Wooing*, like *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, was written in great sadness and travail of spirit as is suggested in this letter to her youngest daughter, Georgiana:

"I am cold, weary, dead; everything is a burden to me.

"I let my plants die by inches before my eyes and do not water them and I dread everything I do, and wish it was not to be done and so when I get a letter from my little girl I smile and say, 'Dear little puss, I will answer it'; and I sit hour after hour with folded hands, looking at the inkstand and dreading to begin. The fact is, pussy, mamma is tired. Life to you is gay and joyous, but to mamma it has been a battle in which the spirit is willing but the flesh weak and she would be glad, like the woman in the St. Bernard, to lie down with her arms around the wayside cross and sleep away into a brighter scene. Henry's fair, sweet face looks down upon me now and then from out a cloud, and I feel again all the bitterness of the eternal 'No' which says I must never, never in this life, see that face, lean on that arm, hear that voice."



**Harriet Beecher Stowe at seventy-three, Hartford, Connecticut, 1884.**



Professor Calvin Ellis Stowe and his son "Charlie,"  
Andover, Massachusetts, 1860.

In this sorrow, and what we should now call a condition bordering upon nervous prostration, she underwent not only the grueling labor of writing *The Minister's Wooing* but also undertook—as a kind of relief and offset to be sure—her idyll of the coast of Maine, *The Pearl of Orr's Island*. The lesser book undoubtedly suffered in the competition for the author's failing strength because, after a strong and fresh opening, which led Whittier to greet it as her best work, it pales off into relative ineffectiveness.

Among the letters which Mrs. Stowe received after the publication of *The Minister's Wooing* was one from Mr. Gladstone. His deep interest in theology had made the book particularly impressive to him.

After finishing in 1859 *The Minister's Wooing* and *The Pearl of Orr's Island*, Mrs. Stowe with her husband and all her children, except the youngest son, again went abroad. In a letter to the writer's father, the left-behind youngest son, Professor Stowe described their attendance at a session of the court of the high sheriff of Lancashire in Liverpool and a call upon the Duchess of Sutherland in London:

"Monday we wanted to go and see the court, so went over to St. George's Hall, a most magnificent structure that beats the Boston State House all hollow and Sir Robert Gerauld himself (the high sheriff) met us and said he would get us a good place. So he took us away round a narrow, crooked passage and opened a little door where we saw nothing but a great crimson curtain, which he told us to put aside and go straight on, and where do you think we found ourselves?

"Right on the platform with the judges in their big wigs and long robes and facing the whole crowded court! It was enough to frighten a body into fits, but we took it quietly as we could and your mamma looked as meek as Moses in her little battered straw hat and gray cloak, seeming to say, 'I didn't come here o' purpose.'

"That same night we arrived in London and Tues-

day . . . we called at Stafford House and inquired if the Duchess of Sutherland was there. A servant came out and said the Duchess was in and would be very glad to see us; so your mamma, Georgie, and I went walking up the magnificent stair-case in the entrance hall, and the great, noble, brilliant Duchess came sailing down the stairs to meet us, in her white morning dress (for it was only four o'clock in the afternoon and she was not yet dressed for dinner), took your mamma into her great bosom and folded her up till the little Yankee woman looked like a small gray kitten half covered in a snowbank, and kissed and kissed her, and then took up little Georgie and kissed her and then she took my hand and didn't kiss me."

While spending the winter in Florence it was proposed one evening, when Mrs. Stowe and her party were storm-bound at Salerno, that the various members of the group write short stories and read them for the amusement of the company. Mrs. Stowe's contribution was the first chapter of *Agnes of Sorrento* which, three years later, she developed into a full-length novel. In the spring she returned to England to sail for home in June. Before sailing she wrote her husband who had preceded her: "I long for home, for my husband and children, for my room, my yard and garden, for the beautiful trees of Andover."

It was almost inconceivable to her friend, John Ruskin, how any one could long to return to America. He wrote her from Geneva at the time she sailed:

"It takes a great deal, when I am at Geneva, to make me wish myself anywhere else, and, of all places else, in London; nevertheless I very heartily wish at this moment that I were looking out on the Norwood Hills and expecting you and the children to breakfast tomorrow. . . .

"What a dreadful thing it is that people should have to go to America again after coming to Europe! It seems to me an inversion of the order of nature. I think America is a sort of 'United' States of Probation, out of which

all wise people, being once delivered, and having obtained entrance into this better world, should never be expected to return (sentence irremediably ungrammatical), particularly when they have been making themselves cruelly pleasant to friends here. . . .”

Mrs. Stowe returned home in time to see her son, Frederick, off for the war. He was a student in the Harvard Medical School. His parents and Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes tried to persuade him to finish his course and then go as a surgeon but the young man hotly declared, “I should be ashamed to look my fellow men in the face if I did not enlist. People shall never say, ‘Harriet Beecher Stowe’s son is a coward.’” The next day he enlisted in the First Massachusetts Infantry.

Abraham Lincoln was seated in front of a cannel-coal fire with his big feet on the mantelpiece in one of the smaller rooms of the White House, when Congressman Henry Wilson entered escorting a little woman and a small boy. The President rose, and striding across the room, said, after a casual greeting to the Congressman, and with his great hand extended in welcome, “So this is the little woman who wrote the book that made this big war!”

He then drew Harriet Beecher Stowe into a window-seat where he explained to her his much misunderstood border-state policy, showing her that had the Emancipation Proclamation been issued earlier it might have antagonized enough border states, whose loyalty was none too secure, to jeopardize the Union cause. He also convinced her of his sincerity and of the finality of the emancipation which was to take effect the next month, in January, 1863, when the provisional Emancipation Proclamation was to become final. Like her brother Henry Ward, she had thought the President “too slow” and had had many misgivings. Just before leaving Hartford for Washington she had said in a note<sup>6</sup> to Mrs. James T. Fields:

<sup>6</sup>*Life and Letters of Harriet Beecher Stowe*, edited by Annie Fields.

"I am going to Washington to see the heads of departments myself and to satisfy myself that I may refer to the Emancipation as a reality and a substance, not a fizzle out at the little end of the horn, as I should be sorry to call the attention of my sisters in Europe to any such impotent conclusion—I mean to have a talk with 'Father Abraham' himself. . . ."

While President Lincoln was talking with Mrs. Stowe, the great austere anti-slavery leader, Henry Wilson, then the Chairman of the Committee on Military Affairs of the House and later to become the Vice-President of the United States,<sup>7</sup> was left to entertain my twelve-year-old father. History does not record nor my father remember what they talked about.

After their conversation President Lincoln brought Mrs. Stowe back to the fire and, as he extended first the palms and then the backs of his huge hands to the warmth, he commented, "I do love an open fire! I s'pose it's because we always had one to home."

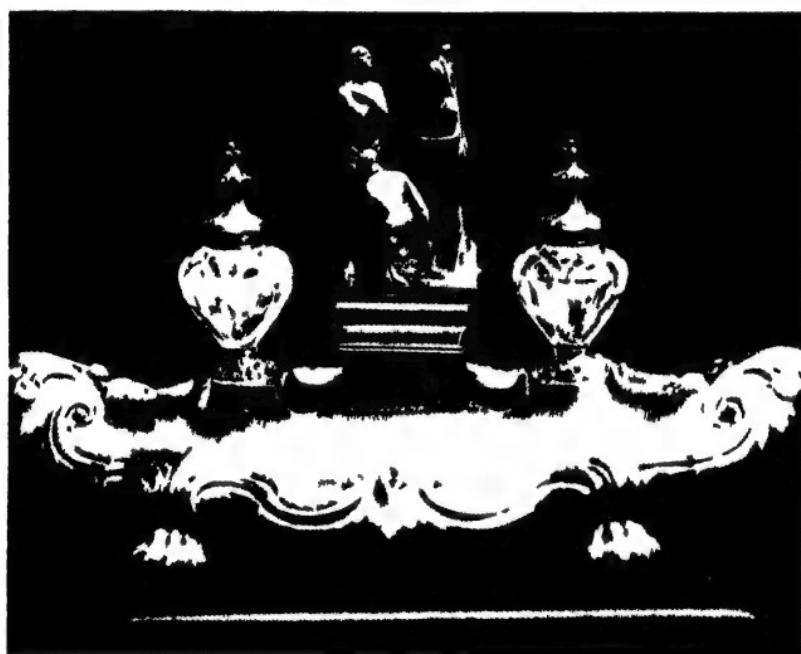
When they got outside the White House my small-boy father inquired, "Oh, Ma, why does the President say 'to home' instead of 'at home'?"

After explaining the President's grammar as best she could, Mrs. Stowe returned to her hotel to write her reply to the women of Great Britain whose protest against slavery had been sent her between eight and nine years before. In this reply, which was published in the *Atlantic Monthly*, Mrs. Stowe told what steps had been taken in the intervening years, looking toward the abolition of slavery, culminating in the Emancipation Proclamation. She then referred reproachfully to the fact that English opinion and action had thus far been dominantly pro-southern—pro-slavery. Here was Harriet's second declaration on her own account! And a daring declara-

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<sup>7</sup>It had been supposed that Secretary Seward introduced Mrs. Stowe to President Lincoln, but a recently discovered letter written by Mrs. Stowe a few days after the event states that it was Congressman Wilson.

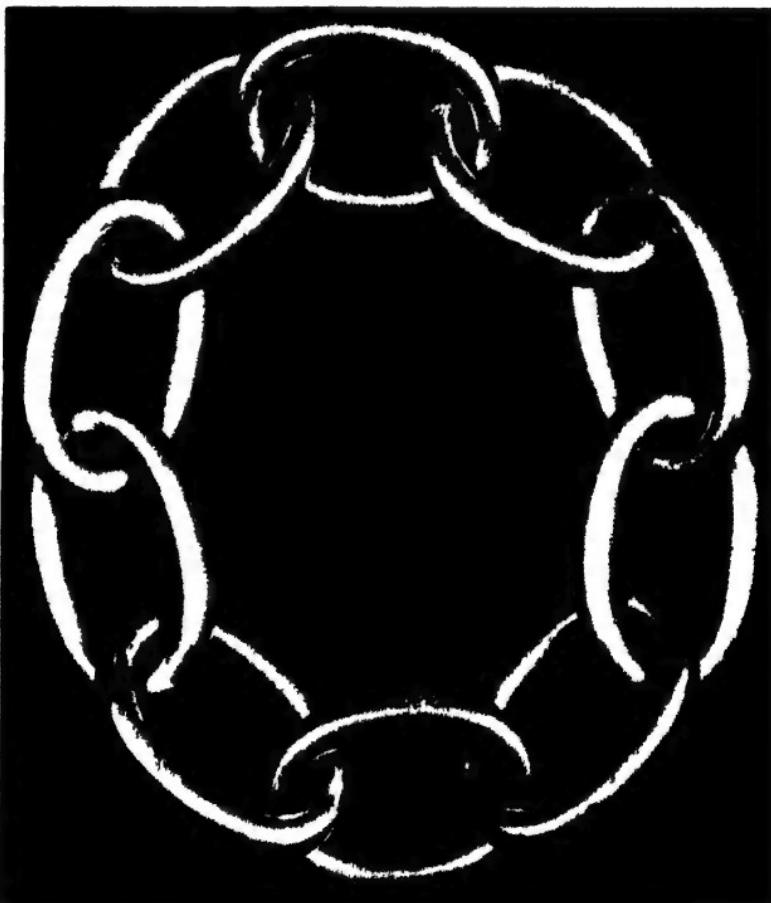
Gifts received by Harriet Beecher Stowe, in 1853, during the tour of the  
British Isles.



"Presented  
to  
Mrs. Harriet Beecher Stowe  
by the Ladies of Surrey Chapel  
London  
as a memento of their Estimation  
of the Genius, Piety and Zeal manifested  
in her efforts for the Emancipation of the American Slaves  
May 26th, 1853."



A bracelet with cameo profile of Harriet Beecher Stowe  
cut in London



The gold bracelet in the form of a slave's shackle presented to Mrs. Stowe at the reception to her at Stafford House, London, by the Duchess of Sutherland.

tion it was! It was certainly no olive branch to the British Government. I have often wondered whether President Lincoln knew she was going to issue it and how sorely pressed Minister Adams felt about it?

However that may be, what she said was all true enough and, according to a letter written her by John Bright, it started a series of mass meetings throughout the British Isles, which apparently helped to swing British opinion to the Union cause. Perhaps these meetings aided in preparing the way for her brother Henry Ward Beecher's English speeches of a few months later.

At the time the Emancipation Proclamation became effective, January 1, 1863, Mrs. Stowe was in the gallery of the Boston Music Hall attending a concert. When the official issuance of the final Proclamation was announced from the stage some one called attention to the fact that Harriet Beecher Stowe was present. Immediately her name was called from all parts of the great hall and she was asked to stand up. When a little woman, somewhat shabbily dressed, arose from a modest gallery seat, and stood bowing and smiling with her bonnet awry as if in sympathetic excitement, the huge audience rose as one man, and turning toward her, cheered frantically for many minutes. It was a fitting close to the heroic period of Harriet Beecher Stowe's career.

## CHAPTER XIV

### HARRIET BEECHER STOWE

#### THE BYRON AFFAIR

BY THE end of the Civil War, Harriet Beecher Stowe, to use the phrase of Mrs. Nathaniel Hawthorne, was "tired far into the future." She had endured all the hardships of poverty and ill health; she had had all the excitement and nervous strain of sudden and phenomenal fame. She had known every private sorrow and public anxiety. She had lost her baby in the Cincinnati cholera epidemic, her eldest son had been drowned, while her second son had been so seriously wounded at the Battle of Gettysburg that his complete recovery was more a passionate hope than a reasonable expectation. Although she continued to work for fifteen years more it was the work of an always tired and sometimes exhausted woman.

In a letter to the Duchess of Argyll in 1866, Mrs. Stowe gave her view of Negro suffrage:

" . . . We all know that the state of society at the South is such that laws are a very inadequate protection even to white men. Southern elections always have been scenes of mob violence *when only white men voted*.

"Multitudes of lives have been lost at the polls in this way, and if against their will Negro suffrage was forced upon them, I do not see how any one in their senses can expect anything less than an immediate war of races.

"If Negro suffrage were required as a condition of acquiring political position, there is no doubt that the slave States would grant it; grant it nominally, because they would know that the grant never could or would become an actual realization. And what would then be gained for the Negro?"

The latter alternative was of course the one actually adopted. And, just as Mrs. Stowe foresaw, exactly nothing was gained for the Negro.

In 1868 Mrs. Stowe wrote *Old Town Folks*, the last of her major books, and almost the only one written with no ulterior purpose. In the preface she said:

“In doing this work, I have tried to make my mind as still and passive as a looking-glass or a mountain lake, and then to give you merely the images reflected there.

“My studies for this object have been Pre-Raphaelite—taken from real characters, real scenes and real incidents. And some of those things in the story which may appear most romantic and like fiction are simple renderings and applications of facts. . . .

“In portraying the various characters which I have introduced, I have tried to maintain the part simply of sympathetic spectator. I propose neither to teach nor preach through them any farther than any spectator of life is preached to by what he sees of the workings of human nature around him.”

Here, for once, Mrs. Stowe followed the advice of James Russell Lowell and put her writing-desk above a pulpit. With an instinctive realization that in this book she had not allowed the preacher in her to obtrude upon the artist she herself held it the best calculated to sustain her reputation. “The real characters, real scenes and real incidents” were drawn from her husband’s life. “Oldtown” was Natick, Massachusetts—Calvin Stowe’s native town. Sam Lawson was the cracker-barrel philosopher of Natick’s general store. “The visionary boy” was Calvin himself. In fact, Professor Stowe talked the book and his wife wrote it. In that sense it was a work of collaboration. When she had finished it she said in a letter to her friend, Mrs. James T. Fields: “The thing has been an awful tax and labor, for I have tried to do it well. I say also to you confidentially that it has seemed as if every private

care that could hinder me as woman and mother has been crowded into just this year that I have had this to do."

The "private cares" were partly financial. In spite of the phenomenal success of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and *Dred* and the reasonable success of the later books, the Stowes were again, as the Professor expressed it, "poor and plagued." They had two expensive places to maintain—one in Hartford, Connecticut, and the other in Mandarin, Florida. Nearly forty-thousand dollars had been invested without return. Scores of poor relations and persons in no way related, for that matter, had been helped far beyond the bounds of prudence. As a result Mrs. Stowe resorted to pot-boiling efforts to supplement an inadequate income. Under this pressure she interrupted her work on *Old Town Folks* to write a magazine article on "Plan-chette" and another on "Learning to Write" and she actually wrote a large book of character sketches of leading public men entitled *Men of Our Times*. Had it not been for these exhausting and exasperating interruptions *Old Town Folks* might have been as carefully and well written throughout as are its best portions. Its chief permanent value is as an historical document—as a living picture of New England life in the early nineteenth century—a period which the railroads, the automobile, the telephone and the radio have rendered almost as remote from ours, psychologically, as the Paleozoic Age.

When Lord Byron's mistress, Countess Guiccioli, published in 1868 her *Recollections of Lord Byron*, in which she charged Lady Byron with being a cold selfish prig who had abandoned her husband without cause to return to the flesh-pots of her rich father's home, Mrs. Stowe felt obliged publicly to defend the reputation of her dead friend. Accordingly, she wrote an article entitled "The True Story of Lady Byron's Life," which appeared in the *Atlantic Monthly* of September, 1869. To meet the storm of accusation and controversy which this article aroused she elaborated it into a book entitled *Lady*

*Byron Vindicated: A History of the Byron Controversy from Its Beginning in 1816 to the Present Time.*

Having heard that this article proved a very doubtful blessing to the *Atlantic* as well as to its author, I wrote Ellery Sedgwick, the present editor, about it and received this reply:

"It is quite true that Mrs. Stowe's paper on Lady Byron almost wrecked the *Atlantic*. I believe the circumstances to be these: Mr. Underwood, 'the editor who never was editor,' was in charge of the office when the package of dynamite was laid on the editorial desk. Fearful of such responsibility, he rushed over to consult Dr. Holmes, who, with utmost benignity, advised him to print the paper. The result was appalling. . . ."

In the late 'fifties Lady Byron's friends had urged upon her the duty of making public her side of her troubles with her husband. Otherwise, they argued, his defensive lies would go down in history as the truth. As to whether she ought to do this or not Lady Byron asked Mrs. Stowe's advice and in this connection she told her in detail the story of her marriage to Lord Byron and their separation after she had discovered and he had admitted and defended his incest with his half sister. Mrs. Stowe's first impulse was to urge Lady Byron to make her story public but, acting under the better balanced and more worldly wise judgment of her sister, Mary (Mrs. Thomas C. Perkins), she finally advised her not to do so because of the avalanche of scandal which she would pull down about her. Lady Byron died without making her story public. When, after Lady Byron's death, Byron's mistress and others undertook to besmirch her memory Mrs. Stowe felt it her duty to tell the story herself. She reasoned that since Lady Byron had not asked her not to make her story public there was an implication that she should do so if ever it were necessary for the protection of Lady Byron's reputation. And since Lady

Byron's English friends remained silent she felt obliged to speak. Her friends and her family, even her children, tried their best to dissuade her. They pointed out that to revive so vile a scandal would involve her in a loathsome controversy and that the advantage to her dead friend's memory was at best doubtful. But she was adamant. She had made up her mind that it was her duty and that was the end of it.

The result was as foully unpleasant as her advisers had warned her it would be. She was almost universally condemned, both in this country and in England. Almost without exception even her staunchest friends felt she had made a serious mistake in judgment while her enemies accused her of seeking notoriety at the expense of public decency. The feeling of her friends was perhaps best expressed by Oliver Wendell Holmes and George Eliot. "I know your firm self-reliance and your courage to proclaim the truth when any good end is to be served by it," wrote Doctor Holmes. "It is to be expected that public opinion will be more or less divided as to the expediency of this revelation. . . ." A blandly non-committal attitude for the man who, it now appears, was really responsible for the publication.

George Eliot wrote:

"In the midst of your trouble I was often thinking of you, for I feared that you were undergoing a considerable trial from the harsh and unfair judgments, partly the fruit of hostility glad to find an opportunity for venting itself, and partly of that unthinking cruelty which belongs to hasty anonymous journalism. For my own part, I should have preferred that the Byron question should never have been brought before the public because I think the discussion of such subjects is injurious socially. But with regard to yourself, dear friend, I feel sure that, in acting on a different basis of impressions, you were impelled by pure, generous feeling."

Whoever may have been right, the fact remains that Lady Byron's story, as given to the public by Mrs. Stowe, rather than Lord Byron's, is now generally accepted as substantially the truth of the matter.

Hardly had the Byron controversy blown over than Mrs. Stowe became absorbingly concerned in the scandal which involved her favorite brother, Henry Ward Beecher. Among the first to write her a letter of sympathy was George Eliot. In her reply, written after the final trial, Mrs. Stowe reviewed her life-long association with her brother and concluded with this tribute:

"Never have I known a nature of such strength and such almost childlike innocence. He is of a nature so sweet and perfect that, though I have seen him thunderously indignant at moments, I never saw him fretful or irritable—a man who continuously in every little act of life is thinking of others, a man that all the children on the street run after, and that every sorrowful, weak or distressed person looks to as a natural helper. In all this long history there has been no circumstance of his relation to any woman that has not been worthy of himself—pure, delicate and proper; and I know all sides of it and certainly should not say this if there were even a misgiving. . . ."

In 1871 Mrs. Stowe wrote with a sigh of relief to her daughters, Hattie and Eliza:

"I have at last finished all my part in the third book of mine that is to come out this year, to wit 'Oldtown Fireside Stories' and you can have no idea what a perfect luxury of rest it is to be free from all literary engagements of all kinds, sorts or descriptions. I feel like a poor woman I once read about—

'Who always was tired,  
'Cause she lived in a house  
Where help wasn't hired,'

and of whom it is related that in her dying moments,

‘She folded her hands  
With her latest endeavor,  
Saying nothing, dear nothing,  
Sweet nothing forever.’

I am in about her state of mind. . . .”

Although she had written at this time twenty-three books she still had ten to write before she could emulate the poor woman of the verse.

The next year instead of “Saying nothing, dear nothing, Sweet nothing forever,” she accepted the offer of the American Bureau of Boston to give forty readings from her own works in the principal cities of New England. While she was considering the offer she wrote Mrs. Fields: “My state in regard to it may be described by the phrase, ‘Kind o’ love to—hate to—wish didn’t—want ter.’”

She gave her first reading in Springfield and it was not too successful. Her next was to be in Tremont Temple, Boston. She stayed with her friends, Mr. and Mrs. James T. Fields.

“She called me into her bedroom,” said Mrs. Fields in her *Life and Letters of Harriet Beecher Stowe*, “where she stood before the mirror, with her soft gray hair, which usually lay in soft curls around her brow, brushed erect and standing stiffly. ‘Look here, my dear,’ she said; ‘now I am exactly like my father, Dr. Lyman Beecher, when he was going to preach,’ and she held up her fore-finger warningly. It was easy to see that the spirit of the old preacher was revived in her veins and the afternoon would show something of his power. An hour later, when I sat with her in the ante-room waiting for the moment of her appearance to arrive, I could feel the power surging up within her. I knew she was armed for a good fight.

“That reading was a great success. She was alive in every fibre of her being. . . .”

In a letter to her husband from Portland, Maine, Mrs. Stowe told of a totally deaf woman who said to her after her reading, "I come jist to see you. I'd rather see you than the Queen." Another woman introduced her two daughters as Eva and Harriet Beecher respectively and remarked that they had come fifty miles to hear and see her. "On the whole it is as easy a way of making money as I have ever tried," she commented in concluding, "though no way of making money is perfectly easy—there must be some disagreeables. The lonesomeness of being at a hotel in dull weather is one." The next season she made a reading tour through the Middle West.

Those readings were her last public appearances unless her seventieth birthday celebration may be so considered. This celebration was a garden party which her publishers, Houghton Mifflin Company, gave her at "The Old Elms"—the beautiful home of former Governor and Mrs. Clafin at Newtonville, Massachusetts. Among those present were: Lucy Larcom, Elizabeth Stuart Phelps, James Parton, Professor Lounsbury, Louise Chandler Moulton, Nathan Haskell Dole, William Dean Howells, Frederick Douglass, William Lloyd Garrison, Jr., John T. Trowbridge, Professor Asa Gray, Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes, John Greenleaf Whittier, Frances Hodgson Burnett and most of Mrs. Stowe's brothers and sisters. The writer was there also. In fact, I had the distinction of being the only baby present.

In reply to Mr. Houghton's address of welcome Henry Ward Beecher said:

" . . . I do not see your faces more clearly than I see those of my father and my mother. Her I only knew as a mere babe-child. He was my teacher and my companion. A more guileless soul than he, a more honest one, more free from envy, from jealousy and from selfishness I never knew. Though he thought he was great by his theology, everybody else knew he was great by his

religion. My mother is to me what the Virgin Mary is to a devout Catholic. She was a woman of great nature, profound as a philosophical thinker, great in argument, with a kind of intellectual imagination, diffident, not talkative—in which respect I take after her—the woman who gave birth to Mrs. Stowe, whose graces and excellences she probably more than any of her children—we number but thirteen—has possessed. . . . I thank you for my father's sake and for my mother's sake for the courtesy, the friendliness and the kindness which you give to Mrs. Stowe."

After poems in her honor by Whittier,<sup>1</sup> Holmes,<sup>2</sup> Elizabeth Stuart Phelps, her daughter Georgie (Mrs. Henry F. Allen), and others, Mrs. Stowe was called upon. In speaking of her personal observation of the progress of the Negroes in Florida where she made her winter home she said:

"I see these people growing richer and richer. I see men very happy in their lowly lot; but, to be sure, you must have patience with them. They are not perfect but have their faults and they are serious faults in the view of white people. But they are very happy, that is evident and they do know how to enjoy themselves—a great deal more than you do. An old Negro friend in our neighborhood has got a new, nice two-story house and an orange grove and a sugar-mill. He has got a lot of money besides. Mr. Stowe met him one day and he said, 'I have got twenty head of cattle, four head of "hoss," forty head of hen and I have got ten children, all *mine*, *every one mine*.' Well, now, that is a thing that a black man could not say once and this man was sixty years old before he could say it. With all the faults of the colored people, take a man and put him down with nothing but his hands and how many could say as much as that? I think they have done well. . . ."

<sup>1</sup> Appendix, pp. 400 and 401.

<sup>2</sup> Appendix, pp. 402 and 403.

Although she lived fifteen years longer, this optimistic observation on the progress of the people whom she helped to free was Harriet Beecher Stowe's last public utterance.

## CHAPTER XV

### HARRIET BEECHER STOWE

#### AS HER FRIENDS AND FAMILY KNEW HER

IN THE autumn of 1862 Mrs. Stowe sought out the oak grove on the bank of the Park River in Hartford, where, with her girlhood friend, Georgiana May, thirty-five years before, she had built her dream-house and there she determined to convert that dream of long ago into a present reality. Professor Stowe had resigned his professorship at the Andover Theological Seminary and the Stowes were to make Hartford their permanent home. To materialize this dream-house required a great deal of hard, prosaic work, to say nothing of expense, as is indicated by this extract from a letter to Mrs. James T. Fields:

"My house with *eight* gables is growing wonderfully. I go over every day to see it. I am busy with drains, sewers, sinks, digging, trenching and above all with manure! You should see the joy with which I gaze on manure heaps in which the eye of faith sees Delaware grapes and D'Angouleme pears, and all sorts of roses and posies which at some future day I hope you will be able to enjoy.

"Can I begin to tell you what it is to begin to keep house in an unfinished home and place, dependent on a carpenter, a plumber, a mason, a bell-hanger, who come and go at their own sweet will, breaking in, making all sorts of dust, chips and dirt. One parlor and my library have thus risen piecemeal by disturbance and convulsions. They are now almost done and the last box of books is almost unpacked, but my head aches so with the past confusion that I cannot get up any feeling of rest. . . ."

To increase Mrs. Stowe's domestic difficulties her daughter, Georgie, and her fiancé, Henry F. Allen, decided to be married in June instead of August as originally planned. This necessitated bringing everything into a state of completeness for a June wedding. This situation Mrs. Stowe described in another letter to Mrs. Fields:

"The garden must be planted, the lawn graded, harrowed, rolled, seeded and the grass up and growing, stumps got out and shrubs and trees got in [there were four acres of grounds], conservatory made over, beds planted, holes filled—and all by three very slippery sort of Irishmen who had rather any time be minding their own business than mine. I have back doorsteps to be made, and troughs, screens and what not; papering, painting and varnishing, hitherto neglected, to be completed; also spring house-cleaning; also dressmaking for one bride and three ordinary females; also—and—wardrobes to be overlooked; also carpets to made and put down; also a revolution in the kitchen cabinet, threatening for a time to blow up the whole establishment altogether. . . ."

Now, while dreams cost nothing, their materialization costs a great deal, so in the midst of all this household turmoil, and with an aching head, Mrs. Stowe ground out her *House and Home Papers* and her *Chimney Corner* essays.

Professor Stowe surveyed the upbuilding of "Oakwold," the dream-place, with unhelpful disapproval. He predicted that it would cost more than they could afford, which it did. The attempt to combine Italian architecture, conservatory, fountains and elaborate plumbing with New England climate made the establishment a permanent bonanza for the local plumbing fraternity. One night the water pipes burst over Professor Stowe's bed. Looking like an aged bedraggled Viking he burst out of his room with flashing eyes and bellowed, "Oh, yes, all the modern conveniences! Shower baths while you sleep!"

When Professor Stowe's worst fears as to the excessive cost of the place had been confirmed he discovered one day a broken window-pane in one of the cellar windows. In his state of overwrought nervous anxiety this seemed the last straw. To send for a glazier would be too expensive—he must mend it himself. Accordingly, he cut out a piece of tin and attempted to tack it over the broken pane. With his usual ineptitude in all matters calling for physical skill he only succeeded in cutting his hands and breaking the remaining window-panes. A little later his wife found him lying groaning on his sofa with handkerchiefs wound around his bleeding hands. At her approach he moaned, "It's no use! It's no use! I've done what I can but nothing can stop our going to the poor-house." After hearing the story of the broken window-panes Mrs. Stowe made him comfortable and then sent for a glazier to mend the window.

Professor Stowe had always had unusual psychic characteristics. He never could tell with certainty whether what he saw before him was actually there in material form or merely seemed to be. One day Mrs. Stowe had planned to take a certain train from Hartford to Boston. She missed it, returned home and seated herself at her desk. The Professor entered the room, looked at her, said nothing and started to leave. Whereupon she exclaimed, "Why, Calvin, why don't you say something? Aren't you surprised to see me here?"

"Oh, is that you, Harriet?" he replied. "I so often see you when you are not there that I didn't know."

He not only saw absent friends but those who had died and at times faces and forms of persons quite unknown to reality. These temperamental peculiarities of Professor Stowe led him and his wife to an interest in spiritualism and psychical phenomena. This interest was increased, as it always is, by death—the death of their adored eldest son, Henry. While spending the winter in Rome, after Henry's death, Mrs. Stowe saw a great deal of the Brownings whom she had met in England. She found they too were interested in such matters and that

common interest became one of the ties between them. A year after their time together in Rome, Elizabeth Barrett Browning wrote Mrs. Stowe from there:

" . . . I don't know how people can keep up their prejudices against spiritualism with tears in their eyes—how they are not, at least, thrown on the 'wish that it might be true,' and the investigation of the phenomena, by that abrupt shutting in their faces of the door of death which shuts them out from the sight of their beloved. My tendency is to beat up against it like a crying child. Not that this emotional impulse is the best for turning the key and obtaining safe conclusions—no. I did not write before because I always do shrink from touching my own griefs, one feels at first so sore that nothing but stillness is borne. . . . "

Writing to Mrs. Stowe on this same subject some years later, George Eliot said:

" . . . apart from personal contact with people who get money by public exhibitions as mediums or with semi-idiots such as those who make a court for Mrs. —, or other feminine personages of that kind, I would not willingly place any barriers between my mind and any possible channel of truth affecting the human lot. . . . "

In another letter George Eliot again referred significantly to the "human lot":

" . . . as to your wonder or conjecture concerning my religious point of view. I believe that religion—has to be modified according to the dominant phases; that a religion more perfect than any yet prevalent must express less care of personal consolation, and the more deeply awing sense of responsibility to man springing from sympathy with that which of all things is most certainly known to us—the difficulty of the human lot. . . . "

In a letter to her husband written from Florence in the winter of 1860 Mrs. Stowe said of her own feeling about spiritualism:

"One thing I am convinced of—that spiritualism is a reaction from the intense materialism of the present age. . . . We ought to enter fully, at least, into the spiritualism of the Bible. Circles and spiritual jugglery I regard as the lying signs and wonders with all deceivable-ness of unrighteousness, but there is a real scriptural spiritualism which has fallen into disuse and must be re-vived and there are doubtless people who, from some constitutional formation, can more readily receive impressions of the surrounding spiritual world. Such were apostles, prophets and workers of miracles."

In continuing the discussion of spiritualism with George Eliot, Mrs. Stowe wrote:

"Do invisible spirits speak in any wise—wise or foolish—is the question a priori. I do not know any reason why there should not be as many foolish virgins in the future state as in this. As I am a believer in the Bible and Christianity I don't need these things as confirmations and they are not likely to be a religion to me. I regard them simply as I do the phenomena of the Aurora Borealis or Darwin's studies on natural selection as curious studies into nature. Besides, I think some day we shall find a law by which all these facts will fall into their places."

After the battle of Gettysburg in which her son Frederick was so severely wounded his mother received this word from the chaplain of his regiment:

"Among the thousands of wounded and dying men on the war-scarred field I have just met with your son, Captain Stowe. If you have not already heard from him it may cheer your heart to know that he is in the hands of good, kind friends. He was struck by a fragment of a shell which entered his right ear. . . ."

When sufficiently recovered Captain Stowe returned home. As soon as he was strong enough a dinner was given him as a returned hero. A single glass of wine made him hopelessly drunk. Never before had he been drunk. After that he not only was made drunk by the slightest amount of alcohol but he could not resist taking it. His mother's many enemies delighted in sending her anonymous letters describing having seen him drunk. Finally he came to his parents and told them he had taken passage on a sailing vessel bound for San Francisco and that he would not return until he had cured himself of drinking—that he did not propose to be a disgrace to his family any further. In spite of their protests and those of the girl to whom he was engaged, he sailed. On reaching San Francisco he met accidentally on the street a college friend who invited him to dine with him that night. He accepted and returned to his hotel to dress. That was the last seen of him. He didn't appear to dine with his friend. Detectives worked on the case for many months without finding the slightest clue.

When long years later his mother's mind began to give way the first symptoms were elaborate preparations for "Fred's" home-coming.

In 1866 Mrs. Stowe rented a cotton plantation near Jacksonville, Florida, where Captain Stowe might raise cotton with former slaves as the laborers. This plan she hoped would help her son to conquer his infirmity and at the same time furnish work to a group of unemployed former slaves. The experiment cost her many thousands of dollars without helping her son or the ex-slaves. It practically amounted to maintaining a free boarding house for a large number of lazy Negroes. Its only useful result was to lead Mrs. Stowe to buy an orange grove at Mandarin on the St. John's River, which became the family's winter home and undoubtedly lengthened the life, usefulness and happiness of both Mrs. Stowe and her husband.

But just as the preacher in Mrs. Stowe dominated the artist in her writing so did the will to do good control her personal affairs.

"My plan of going to Florida," she wrote her brother Charles, "as it lies in my mind is not in any sense a mere worldly enterprise. I have for many years had a longing to be more immediately doing Christ's work on earth. My heart is with that poor people whose cause in words I have tried to plead and who now, ignorant and docile, are just in that formative stage in which whoever seizes, has them.

"Corrupt politicians are already beginning to speculate on them as possible capital for their schemes and to fill their poor heads with all sorts of vagaries. . . .

"I am now in correspondence with the Bishop of Florida with a view to establishing a line of churches along the St. John's River and if I settle at Mandarin it will be one of my stations. Will you consent to enter the Episcopal Church and be our clergyman? You are just the man we want. If my tasks and feelings did not incline me toward the Church I should still choose it as the best system for training immature minds such as those of our Negroes. The system was composed with reference to the wants of the laboring class of England at a time when they were as ignorant as our Negroes now are.

"I long to be at this work and cannot think of it without my heart burning within me. . . ."

Of their Mandarin home Mrs. Stowe sent to George Eliot this description:

"I found a hut built close to a great live-oak twenty-five feet in girth and with overarching boughs eighty feet up in the air, spreading like a firmament, and all swaying with mossy festoons. We began to live here and gradually we improved the hut by lath, plaster and paper. Then we threw out a wide veranda all round for in these regions the veranda is the living-room of the house. Ours had to be built around the trunk of the tree so that our cottage has a peculiar and original air and seems as if it



Harriet Beecher Stowe with two of her grandchildren, Lyman Beecher Stowe and Leslie Stowe, in Hartford, Connecticut, 1887.



Where the Stowes spent the winters from 1867 to 1884. Harriet Beecher Stowe with her husband, Professor Cabin Ellis Stowe; her sister, Mrs. Thomas C. Perkins; her daughter, Eliza, under the live-oak trees in front of their house in Mandarin on the St. John's River, Florida.

were half tree or a something that had grown out of the tree. We added on parts and have thrown out gables and chambers as a tree throws out new branches, till our cottage is like nobody else's. . . . There are all sorts of queer little rooms in it and we are accommodating at this present a family of seventeen souls. In front, the beautiful, grand St. John's stretches five miles from shore to shore and we watch the steamboats plying back and forth to the great world we are out of. On all sides, large orange trees with their dense shade and ever-vivid green, shut out the sun so that we can sit and walk and live in the open air. . . .

"My poor rabbi! [her pet name for the Professor] sends you some Arabic which I fear you cannot read: . . . he is up to his ears in knowledge, having read all things in all tongues from the Talmud down. . . ."

Mrs. Stowe's book, *Palmetto Leaves*, is a description of their life in Florida.

Professor Stowe sat on this veranda all day long, with a box of books beside him, reading one after another. He was a picturesque figure with his black skull-cap, his gold-rimmed spectacles, his aureole of white whiskers, his huge bulk and beside him his heavy gold-headed cane. An enterprising steamboat company in Jacksonville got up a series of excursions from Jacksonville to Mandarin and back for a modest sum with Harriet Beecher Stowe thrown in without extra charge as one of the attractions. Professor Stowe rather enjoyed these excursionists because they furnished him with a fresh audience daily for his stories. He was an extraordinary raconteur and the family had of course heard all his stories. One day among the excursionists came a little clerk escorting two women. Suddenly the clerk reached up and ruthlessly wrenched off the tree a large branch covered with orange blossoms which hung right in front of the veranda. Crashing his great cane on to the piazza, Professor Stowe roared at the little man:

"You ruthless little varlet—drop that branch and get off this place as fast as you can travel!"

The little man tremblingly replied, "I thought this was Harriet Beecher Stowe's place."

"So it is," thundered the Professor, "and I'll have you know that I am the proprietor of Harriet Beecher Stowe and of this place—now git!"

The preparations for the annual family migration from Hartford to Mandarin were domestic convulsions of the first magnitude. The Professor's conception of packing was to fill his trunk with books and then to jam in on top of the books a very few elementary necessities in the way of clothes and toilet articles. His twin daughters, Hattie and Eliza, were well aware of this paternal weakness so one of them would pounce in upon him to inspect his trunk before he closed it.

"Pa, you're up to your old tricks. You've gone and filled that trunk with books so you have no room for your necessary clothes. Now, you just take out books until there's room enough for what you need!"

So Pa would reluctantly but obediently remove book after book—for him to discard books was like pulling teeth—until the relentless daughter was satisfied.

When the family caravan was at last ready for the great trek Eliza Stowe would say to her absent-minded little mother, "Now, Ma, listen. Hattie's got the cats, I've got the birds and the girls [servants] have the dogs—now you must look after Pa!"

On one such occasion, when three old sea-going hacks drew up to the door to take the family to the station, one of the daughters made the alarming discovery that Ma was missing. No one had seen her for an hour. A frantic search was started at once. Ma was found painting flowers in the back garden.

*Hattie Stowe firmly:*

"Ma Stowe, what are you doing?"

"Painting flowers, dear," replied Ma mildly and innocently.

"So I see! That's a fine thing to be doing when the carriages are at the door!"

"What carriages, dear?" blandly inquired Ma.

"What carriages! what carriages indeed! Ma, how can you ask such a question when we've been preparing for this moment for three weeks? Now, do hurry, put away your paints and wash up or we'll lose the train." So Ma went hurriedly and apologetically into the house. And it was she who had the responsibility of looking after Pa.

While Mrs. Stowe's youngest son, Charles, was in Harvard College in the early 'seventies his mother took him with her on a trip to the South. On this journey they visited Charleston. Before they had time to unpack at their hotel a carriage drove up to the door and a Negro servant delivered a note to Mrs. Stowe. This note was from a Charleston lady who urged them to get into her carriage and come to her house, concluding that she could not bear to have them in a hotel. Amazed but compliant they got into the carriage and were driven to a fine old ante-bellum house. At the door they were greeted by a stately white-haired lady who explained why she had invited them. During the war, when a northern army held the city, some drunken Union privates broke into the house and began to loot it. The father and sons were at the front. The mother and her two daughters were without protection. The mother was sick in bed in her room. In terror one of the daughters rushed into the street to find help. She met a Union Colonel, told him what was happening and asked his aid. He returned home with her, turned out the drunken soldiers, and then, turning to the daughters, said, "Ladies, if you would feel more comfortable I will move into the house to protect you during the occupation of the city." They eagerly accepted his offer. The elderly lady concluded, "And that officer, Mrs. Stowe, was your nephew, Colonel Robert Beecher. Ever since then we have longed for an opportunity to show some kindness to a member of the Beecher family." And that was in the country

from which, only two decades earlier, the young Cambridge graduate had been driven out in disgrace for daring to give a copy of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* to a southern lady!

This was not the only hospitality which Harriet Beecher Stowe received in the South. A few years later when she was returning North from a visit to her brother Charles, who had a place at Newport, Florida, she was given public receptions both in New Orleans and at Tallahassee. She was led to feel that the more open-minded southerners at any rate had begun to realize that she had been an enemy of slavery but not of the South.

In 1878 Mrs. Stowe wrote *Poganuc People*—her last book. Of it she wrote to her son Charles: "In it I condense my recollections of a bygone era, that in which I was brought up, the ways and manners of which are now as nearly obsolete as the old England of Dickens' stories. . . ."

In sending a copy of the book to Doctor and Mrs. Oliver Wendell Holmes she wrote from Mandarin:

"I sent 'Poganuc People' to you and Mrs. Holmes as being among the few who know those old days. It is an extremely quiet story for these sensational days when heaven and earth seem to be racked for a thrill, but as I get old I do love to think of those quiet, simple times when there was not a poor person in the parish and the changing glories of the year were the only spectacle. . . ."

In response to an invitation to visit friends in the North she wrote from Florida, "I shall be most happy to come. . . . I have, thank goodness, no serial story on hand for this summer to hang like an Old Man of the Sea about my neck, and hope to enjoy a little season of being like other folks."

The dream-house on the Park River in Hartford had become by the early 'seventies something of a nightmare, not only because of its excessive cost for maintenance, but because

factories and tenement houses had grown up around it and the once charming little stream had become foully polluted and had fittingly come to be called, as it still is, the Hog River. Accordingly, the place was sold and the Stowes moved into the modest little ready-made house on Forest Street where they remained as long as the Professor and Mrs. Stowe lived. Here they became a part of Hartford's famous Nook Farm literary colony with the Samuel Clemens [Mark Twain] on one side of them and the Charles Dudley Warners on the other.

In a recent letter my father, Charles Edward Stowe, briefly described his mother's daily routine:

"It was her habit to wander about the garden picking flowers and singing hymns till nine o'clock in the morning before she shut herself up in her room for writing. At midday dinner she was usually silent and abstracted. After dinner she returned to her room and lay on her bed which was scattered with French and English books—Scott's novels, the works of George Sand and other odds and ends of literature. In the late afternoon she wandered in the groves near the house until supper time. She was fond of the poetry of Byron, Scott, Wordsworth, Longfellow and Whittier. She could recite from memory the whole of 'The Lay of the Last Minstrel.' This was one of her favorite recreations. At the supper table she was again dreamy and abstracted till she had drunk her second cup of tea; then, with a merry twinkle in her eye, she began to sit up and take notice. When she started to talk it was well worth while to listen."

In 1870 Catharine Beecher wrote<sup>1</sup> from the Stowes' Hartford home to an editor who was beginning to inquire about a story which Mrs. Stowe had agreed to furnish by November first:

<sup>1</sup> Letter now in the possession of her grandniece, Katharine Seymour Day, who lives in the Stowe house on Forest Street in Hartford.

"Now, if you will write as encouragingly ~~as~~ you can as to your prospects and show how well you can manage if she *does not* be ready for the first of November—it will make it almost sure she will be ready.

"I have just been up to her in bed and have talked over with her a saucy and most interesting plan of a story and she seems to think she can begin soon and when she once gets started all is easy—so write and cheer her up and all will go well. . . ."

About ten years later Mrs. Stowe wrote in a somewhat similar vein to her husband's publisher about his work on *The History and Origin of the Books of the Bible*:

"You must not scare him off by grimly declaring that you must have the *whole manuscript complete* before you set the printer to work; you must take the three quarters he brings you and at least make believe begin printing and he will immediately go to work and finish up the whole; otherwise what with lectures and the original sin of laziness, it will all be indefinitely postponed. I want to make a crisis, that he shall feel that *now* is the accepted time and that this must be finished first and foremost."

The wifely stratagem succeeded. The book was finished on schedule time and brought in ten thousand dollars—probably the last kind of reward which either the Professor or his wife expected!

The winter of 1884 was the last which the Stowes spent in their Florida home. After that, until his death in 1886, the Professor's health was too precarious for so long a journey. In these last two years of his life Mrs. Stowe devoted herself to her husband to the exclusion of everything else. During their last winter in Mandarin she wrote her friend, Mrs. John R. Howard, in Brooklyn:

*"I have been very unwell the season past. I have suffered more pain, more weariness and weakness, than ever*

in my life before. . . . But one thing, dear precious friend, I cannot do while my husband lives, I cannot visit and leave him, neither can I take him. He requires personal attentions that only a wife ought to render. They are not fatiguing nor exhausting but require that I should be constantly with him. I think we have never enjoyed each other's society more than this winter. His mind is still clear and bright and he is competent as ever to explain a text or instruct me in the merits of a verse. . . ."

People who tried to show Mrs. Stowe off were frequently grievously disappointed. Once while she was visiting her brother, Henry Ward Beecher, in Brooklyn, Mrs. S. V. White gave her a luncheon to which she invited a group of the most fashionable ladies of Brooklyn. Mrs. Stowe sat at table with a far-off look in her eyes and barely spoke. After lunch the ladies eagerly gathered about her so as to miss nothing she said. She sat with a book half open in her right hand, looking vaguely through and beyond, but not at, her fellow-guests, and answered their questions in monosyllables. Mrs. White gave her no more luncheons.

When she and her daughter-in-law, Mrs. Charles Edward Stowe, were visiting the former Governor and Mrs. Clafin at Newtonville, Massachusetts, the Clafins invited a large group of people, among whom were many persons of great distinction, to an evening reception to meet Mrs. Stowe. By the time the guests began to arrive Mrs. Stowe had disappeared. Mrs. Clafin sent my mother to Mrs. Stowe's room to urge her to come down at once. Mother found she had gone to bed. When she explained the situation and urged her to get up and dress and come down, Mrs. Stowe replied, "Susie dear, I have a bad headache and am not fit to go down. Furthermore, it can't possibly make any real difference to all those important and brilliant people whether I am there or not. So you give my excuses to Mrs. Clafin and leave me to try to get some

sleep." And no arguments would move her. Many people regarded such exasperating behavior as selfish arrogance and pose. Her friends and family knew that it was partly lack of sophistication and absent-mindedness and partly a genuine inability to realize that her presence or conduct on any ceremonial or social occasion could be a matter of importance to other people.

These traits, coupled with her incorrigible other-worldliness, made her, like her brother, Henry Ward Beecher, and in fact all the Beechers, a chronic failure when measured by the standards of fashionable society. A society leader in Boston once said to Mrs. Fields, "Why is it that for some reason Mrs. Stowe does not seem to go into the best society?"

Every Sunday morning when I was a small boy in Hartford my grandmother used to call for my mother and me in one of those old-fashioned hacks to take us to hear her son, Charles, my father, preach. One Sunday morning, when my mother was out of town, she took me alone. I was wearing, plastered on to the back of my head, one of those round tight-fitting small boy's caps of the day. When we took our seats, way up in front in the minister's pew, I forgot to take off this cap. My mother usually took it off for me. Grandmother, always absent-minded, didn't notice the omission, but when my father looked upon us from above, he did. He came down from the pulpit, removed my cap, then reascended the pulpit and opened the service. Grandmother and I were amused, but I don't recall that either of us felt either embarrassment or guilt.

In a letter to her brother, Edward, written in 1887, she said:

" . . . I often think, 'Why am I spared?' Is there yet anything for me to do? I am thinking, with my son Charles' help, of writing a review of my life under the title, 'Pebbles from the Shores of a Past Life.' . . .

"I feel about all things now as I do about the things that happen in a hotel after my trunk is packed to go home. I may be vexed and annoyed . . . but what of it? I am going home soon."

Her strength did not prove equal to writing her reminiscences even with her son's help so he wrote her life, in her own words as far as possible, which was published in 1889 and from the materials of which I have liberally quoted.

Four years later Mrs. Stowe said, in her last letter, to her intimate friend, Mrs. Howard, of Brooklyn:

"My sun has set. The time of work for me is over. I have written all my words and thought all my thoughts, and now I rest me in the flickering light of the dying embers, in a rest so profound that the voice of an old friend arouses me but momentarily and I drop back again into repose. . . ."

At last, after sixty-seven years of exhausting labors she could, like the poor woman of the verse whom she had envied twelve years before, "Say nothing, dear nothing, sweet nothing forever."

And this "sweet nothing" in her case took the form of a literal second childhood. She was as happy as a child, probably happier, and she became as irresponsible as a little child. She sang little snatches of songs in a broken and quavering voice, drummed on her old tuneless piano, picked flowers which she forgot before she had put them in water, and strolled about the neighborhood, particularly in woods and gardens, and vainly tried to run away from the muscular Irish woman whose duty it was to follow her wherever she went. Like a child she played harmless practical jokes on her family and neighbors. When a ministerial convention meeting in the city sent a delegation to wait upon her and read her a memorial to her "genius and achievements" she became restive, just as would a child, before the reverend spokesman had finished reading the tedi-

ous resolutions—got up from her chair, stepped behind the dignified gentleman, and, to his acute embarrassment, began to drum on his back.

As if in compensation for her sixty-seven years of excessive responsibility, work and anxiety she had at the close of her life three years of complete irresponsibility, idleness and child-like happiness. She had brought up six children and written thirty-three books; she had espoused the cause of anti-slavery and every other cause, including woman suffrage, which in her view advanced human freedom; and, in spite of this prodigal output of effort and energy, she lived for eighty-five years—until July 1, 1896.<sup>2</sup> Her friends sang at her funeral the hymns she loved best. A chorus of Negro singers from a southern school, who happened opportunely to be in the city, sang some Negro spirituals. I remember at the funeral a handsome old lady with snow-white hair and the serenity of great age who, despite the fact that every man in the house had offered her his chair, persisted in sitting on the stairs. I was introduced to her as “Aunt Eunice” . . . she was Mrs. Henry Ward Beecher. With the strains of *The Other World*, one of Mrs. Stowe’s own hymns,<sup>3</sup> the simple ceremony concluded:

It lies around us like a cloud,  
A world we do not see;  
Yet the sweet closing of an eye  
May bring us there to be.

Its gentle breezes fan our cheek;  
Amid our worldly cares,  
Its gentle voices whisper love,  
And mingle with our prayers.

<sup>2</sup>She was buried beside her husband in Andover, Massachusetts.

<sup>3</sup>She had written many hymns another of which was, *When I Awake I Am Still with Thee*. Sung to various settings, among which is Mendelssohn’s *Consolation*. See Appendix, p. 408.

Sweet hearts around us throb and beat,  
Sweet helping hands are stirred,  
And palpitates the veil between  
With breathings almost heard.

Sweet souls around us! watch us still;  
Press nearer to our side;  
Into our thoughts, into our prayers,  
With gentle helpings glide.

Let death between us be as naught,  
A dried and vanished stream;  
Your joy be the reality,  
Our suffering life the dream.

## CHAPTER XVI

### HENRY WARD BEECHER: 1813-1887

#### EDUCATING HENRY WARD

"WHEN Henry is sent to me with a message," said an aunt, "I always have to make him say it three times. The first time I have no manner of an idea, than if he spoke Choctaw; the second, I catch now and then a word; by the third time I begin to understand."

Such was the early vocal promise of the man who came to be regarded as the Demosthenes of his day. He was a clumsy bashful boy whose utterance was thick—partly from embarrassment and partly from an enlarged palate.

That he was not, however, an unattractive child, at any rate to his motherly elder sister, Catharine, this comment in a letter written somewhat earlier than the aunt's remark, would indicate:

"Henry is a very good boy and we think him a remarkably interesting child and he grows dearer to us every day. He is very affectionate and seems to love his father with all his heart. His constant prattle is a great amusement to us all. He often speaks of his sister Harriet and wishes spring would come so that she might come home and go to school with him. . . ."

His childish eagerness to go to school was promptly banished when Harriet returned and was sent with her young brother to the Widow Kilbourne's School on West Street in Litchfield. Such bowels of compassion as this gaunt and weather-beaten female may once have had, had long since dried up and her pedagogical reliance had come to rest exclusively in her ferule

and long flexible hickory switches. Routine memorizing was the Widow Kilbourne's conception of education. Henry had no verbal memory, indeed throughout his life he never acquired any. That is the reason there are practically no quotations in his extemporaneous sermons and speeches and, for the most part, he spoke extemporaneously in his later life. But the widow was not interested in inherent defects. She applied her only remedies—the ferule and the switch—with conscientious vigor and complete futility.

This letter written to an absent sister is the only surviving evidence of Henry's literary acquirements under the régime of the Widow Kilbourne:

"Der Sister

"We ar al wel. Ma haz a baby. The old sow has six pigs."<sup>1</sup>

A little later Henry was transferred to the district school and his sister Harriet, in describing him at this period in the retrospect of maturity said, "this bashful dazed looking boy pattered barefoot to and from the little unpainted school-house, with a brown towel or a blue checked apron to hem during the intervals between his spelling and reading lessons."

There were two years between the brother and sister—Harriet was born in Litchfield, June 14, 1811, and Henry, June 24, 1813.

Henry's recollections of his district school-days, as given in his essay, "School Reminiscence," one of his *Star Papers*, would not suggest that it was any improvement over the Widow Kilbourne's School.

"In winter we were squeezed into the recess of the furthest corner, among little boys, who seemed to be sent to

<sup>1</sup> Letter reproduced in facsimile in *A Biography of Henry Ward Beecher*, by his son, William C. Beecher, and his son-in-law, Samuel Scoville.

school merely to fill up the chinks between the bigger boys. Certainly we were never sent for any such absurd purpose as an education. There were the great scholars; the school in winter was for *them*, not for us piccaninnies. We were read and spelled twice a day, unless something happened to prevent, which *did* happen about every other day. For the rest of the time we were busy in keeping still. And a time we always had of it. Our shoes always would be scraping on the floor, or knocking the shins of urchins who were also being 'educated.' All of our little legs together (poor, tired, nervous, restless legs, with nothing to do!) would fill up the corner with such a noise, that every ten or fifteen minutes the master would bring down his two-foot hickory ferule on the desk with a clap that sent shivers through our hearts to think how that would have felt if it had fallen somewhere else; and then, with a look that swept us all into utter extremity of stillness, he would cry, 'Silence! in that corner!' Stillness would last for a few minutes; but, little boys' memories are not capacious. Moreover, some of the boys had great gifts of mischief, and some of mirthfulness, and some had both together. The consequence was, that just when we were the most afraid to laugh, we saw the most comical things to laugh at. Temptations which we could have vanquished with a smile out in the free air, were irresistible in our little corner where a laugh and a stinging slap were very apt to woo each other. So, we would hold on, and fill up; and others would hold on and fill up too; till, by and by, the weakest would let go a mere whiffet of a laugh, and, then, down went all the precautions, and one went off, and another, and another, touching off the others like a pack of fire-crackers! It was in vain to deny it. But, as the process of snapping our heads and pulling our ears went on with primitive sobriety, we each in turn, with tearful eyes and blubbering lips, declared 'we didn't mean to,' and that was true; and that 'we wouldn't do so any more,' and that was a fib, however unintentional; for we never failed to do just so again, and that about once an hour all day long.

"Besides this, our principal business was to shake and

shiver at the beginning of the school for very cold; and to sweat and stew for the rest of the time, before the fervid glances of a great box iron stove, red hot. O, dear! can there be anything worse for a lively mercurial, mirthful, active little boy, than going to a winter district-school? Yes. Going to a summer district-school! There is no comparison. The last is the Miltonic depth below the deepest depth."

While Henry was free of this dreaded school on Sundays, on that day there were other afflictions almost as bad, the catechism and church. His stepmother was inflexible in her catechism exactions.

"My second mother (Harriet Porter) was stately and not easy to approach. She was a beautiful person, serene and ladylike. She never lacked self-possession in speech, gesture or posture. She was polished, but to my young thoughts she was cold. . . . Although I was longing to love somebody she did not call forth my affection; and my father was too busy to be loved."

Children were no longer a novelty in the parsonage by the time Henry made his appearance; he was the eighth child, the seventh of the living children. Many years later his sister, Harriet, wrote of his struggles with the catechism:

"The other children memorized readily and were brilliant reciters, but Henry, blushing, stammering, confused and hopelessly miserable, stuck fast on some sand-bank of what is required or forbidden by this or that commandment, his mouth choking up with the long words which he hopelessly miscalled, was sure to be accused of idleness or inattention and to be solemnly talked to, which made him look more stolid and miserable than ever, but appeared to have no effect in quickening his dormant faculties."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup>*Men of Our Times*, by Harriet Beecher Stowe.

Then in church while his father was preaching his long, and to small boys completely unintelligible sermons, Henry would at last fall asleep and when he was quiet and in nobody's way his superconscious stepmother would rap him on the head with her knuckles until he woke up. That unintentional unkindness he was never able to forgive her.

And also Henry suffered acutely from bashfulness. "To walk into a room where 'company' was assembled," he commented in the same reminiscences, "and to do it erectly and naturally, was as impossible as it would have been to fly. . . . Our back-bone grew soft, our knees lost their stiffness, the blood rushed to the head and the sight almost left our eyes. . . ." And this bashfulness he never entirely outgrew. When he was over sixty, he remarked to his friend, Rossiter W. Raymond, of Brooklyn, that he never entered, without embarrassment, a room in which he expected to find strangers.

"It was my duty," he added, "after I got to be about eight years old to go down-stairs and build a fire [presumably in the Russian stove]. Ours was a house in which when the weather was cold, if water was left in any vessel it would freeze and split the vessel asunder, and of course crockery had no chance. Our well used to choke up with ice so that we had to cut it out in order to get the bucket down; and sometimes when the cistern was frozen up so that we could not get water from it, I have gone on washing days, two miles, and dipped water from a brook into barrels and brought it home."

But any idea that Henry Ward's boyhood was one of unrelieved hardship, repression and gloom would be far from the fact. He had abounding, ebullient health and spirits, and reveled in the sights and sounds which surrounded him except when in church or in the district school. "I knew," as he said, "where the sweet flag was, where the sassafras-trees

were, where the squirrels were, where all things were that boys enterprise after, therefore I had a world of things to do."

Henry was greatly influenced in his moral development by his memory of his mother, Roxana Foote, and by a hired man, a Negro.

"The memory of my mother as one sainted has exerted a singular influence on me. After I came to be about fourteen or fifteen years of age I began to be distinctly conscious that there was a silent, secret, and, if you please to call it so, romantic influence which was affecting me. It grew and it grows so that in some parts of my nature I think I have more communion with my mother whom I never saw except as a child three years old than with any living being. I am conscious that all my life long there has been a moral power in my memory of her. . . . It has come to be so much to me that no devout Catholic ever saw so much in the Virgin Mary as I have seen in my mother who has been a presence to me ever since I can remember. . . ."

"I next came under the influence of a very humble serving man. He opened up new directions to me and gave me new impulses. He was a colored man; and I am not ashamed to say that my whole life, my whole career respecting the colored race in the conflict which was so long carried on in this country, was largely influenced by the effect produced on my mind, when I was between eight and ten years of age, by a poor old colored man who worked on my father's farm. . . . He used to lie upon his humble bed (I slept in the same room with him) and read his Testament, unconscious apparently that I was in the room; and he would laugh and talk about what he read, and chuckle over it with that peculiarly unctuous throat-tone which belongs to his race. I never had heard the Bible really read before; but there, in my presence, he read it, and talked about it to himself and to God. He turned the New Testament into living forms right before me. It was a revelation and an impulse to me."

Apparently from this old Negro he got his first sense of the joyousness of religion, which was to play so large a part in the efficacy of his faith, both for himself and for others.

After Henry's lack of progress in the hated district school had become only too obvious, his father sent him to Hartford to attend his sister Catharine's Hartford Female Seminary. There he achieved a reputation among "the young ladies" as a wit but not as a student. The following year he was put in the care of a fellow-clergyman in the neighboring town of Bethlehem where he learned new woods, hills and streams but little else.

Finally when Henry was thirteen, in 1826, his father moved to Boston to become the minister of the Hanover Street Church. Naturally Henry and his brothers and sisters, except those who had grown up and left home, went too. The difficult problem of Henry's education was then put up to that famous institution—the Boston Latin School. Here with a maximum of effort Henry acquired a minimum of Latin and Greek, together with much restlessness and depression. In spite of the stimulation of occasional fights between the boys' gang of his neighborhood and similar gangs of hostile boys, he found the streets of Boston a poor exchange for the woods, hills and streams of Litchfield. The only phases of Boston life that thrilled him and stimulated his imagination were the church-bells on Sunday morning and the ships in the harbor. He spent hours on the wharfs watching the ships sailing in and out of the harbor and dreaming dreams of the strange worlds and adventures which lay before or behind them. These dreams were peopled with characters and scenes from all the sea stories he could lay his hands on. Finally he came to his first great resolve—his school life was intolerable. He must go to sea! Since his conscience would not permit him to run away he wrote a note to one of his brothers telling of his determination to run away to sea unless he could secure his father's permission. This note he dropped where his father

would be sure to find it. This was typical of his life-long habit of following a bold course in a cautious manner.

Doctor Beecher slipped the note into his pocket and said nothing, but the next day he invited Henry to saw wood with him.

"Now the wood pile was the principal debating ground," said his sister, Harriet, in her sketch of her brother's life in *Men of Our Times*, "and Henry felt complimented by the invitation, as implying manly companionship.

"'Let us see,' says the Doctor, 'Henry, how old are you?'

"'Almost fourteen!'

"'Bless me how boys do grow!—Why it's almost time to be thinking what you are going to do. Have you ever thought?'

"'Yes—I want to go to sea!'

"'To sea! Of all things! Well, well! After all, why not?—Of course you don't want to be a common sailor. You want to get into the Navy?'

"'Yes, sir, that's what I want.'

"'But not merely as a common sailor, I suppose?'

"'No sir, I want to be a midshipman and after that a commodore.'

"'I see,' said the doctor cheerfully. 'Well, Henry, in order for that, you know, you must begin a course of mathematics and study navigation and all that.'

"'Yes sir, I am ready.'

"'Well then I'll send you up to Amherst next week to Mount Pleasant and then you'll begin your preparatory studies and if you are well prepared I presume I can make interest to get you an appointment.'"

And so he went to Mount Pleasant Collegiate Institute at Amherst, Massachusetts, his father remarking shrewdly, "I shall have that boy in the ministry yet."

Here under the instruction of a West Point graduate, W. P. Fitzgerald, for whom he formed his first ardent attach-

ment, and with Lord Nelson as his ideal he began to make progress even in mathematics, the most abhorred of his studies. Also John E. Lovell, a remarkable teacher of elocution, began to make a speaker of him in spite of his bashfulness and thick voice. All his life he gave Lovell the credit for laying the foundations for his success as a preacher and orator.

Soon a religious revival swept the school and Henry was brought to a faltering sense of conversion which impelled him to write his father a very hesitant letter about his desire to become a Christian, in the technical language of the day "he was entertaining a hope." His father jubilantly sent for him, and under the irresistible impact of his father's enthusiasm, he joined his church, his naval longings began to vanish and in their place appeared very tentative and wavering ambitions to become a minister. If there was ever a son who had his career forced upon him by a determined father, in spite of a semblance of freedom of choice, it was Henry Ward Beecher.

After three years Henry entered Amherst College with the class of 1834. Despite his improvement in mathematics and elocution, his father was far from satisfied with his progress as shown by this letter<sup>3</sup> which he wrote his old friend, President Heman Humphrey:

"After much deliberation and some hesitation I have concluded to send my son Henry to Amherst. One of the reasons of this decision is that in his preparation at Mount Pleasant he has been taught carelessly and has formed a habit of getting his lessons (I speak of the languages especially) superficially. . . . I am exceedingly dissatisfied with the result of three years study there at an expense of more than 800 dollars. . . . I understand that teaching by professors and having smaller classes—a more particular attention can be and is paid to each student than might be procurable at Yale. These statements I wish you not to communicate unless it be con-

<sup>3</sup>Now in the Amherst College Library.

fidentially to his instructor requesting him to have a regard particularly to the accuracy of his mutations in the languages. . . . So far as I know his conduct has been circumspect but on the whole I shall regard his safety greater in Amherst than at New Haven whither I was minded to send him in the indulgence of a natural affection for my own Alma Mater. . . .”

There was undoubtedly another reason, quite as powerful, although unmentioned, why Lyman Beecher selected Amherst. It had been founded nine years before to help to counteract the heretical influences of Harvard, or Cambridge, as it was then called. In fact, in the argument drawn up by Noah Webster to be used in soliciting funds for the founding of Amherst this is one of the specific reasons stated why such a college was needed. Mrs. Roswell Skeel, a great-granddaughter of Noah Webster, once showed me this curious document. Yes, the primary purpose of the founders was to educate poor young men for the evangelical ministry. Could any purpose be dearer to Lyman Beecher's heart?

This ill-equipped, ill-endowed, struggling little college with a president and six professors and two hundred students was sturdily combating the pernicious Unitarian heresies of rich and powerful Cambridge. The students took care of their rooms, made their own fires and sawed their wood. The tuition fees were thirty to forty dollars, board one dollar to one dollar and fifty cents per week, and the expense of the entire four-year course was not over eight hundred dollars. No wonder Lyman Beecher thought eight hundred dollars expensive for three years of preparatory study!

On his way to Amherst, Henry stopped at Hartford to see his sisters, Catharine, Mary and Harriet. “Catharine and Harriet came to tea,” said Henry in a letter to his brother, Charles, “after which I went home with them when Harriet put her curls on to my head and her bonnet, Catharine, a cloak and neckhandkerchief and then called the young ladies in and

they thought that I was Harriet, and then, to cap all, Harriet put on a man's cloak and my hat and she looked exactly like you."

When Henry entered Amherst, he must have been a trial to whomever President Humphrey assigned "to have a regard particularly to the accuracy of his mutations in the languages," because he decided to pay only such attention to any language except his own as was necessary to secure a respectable grade. Henry said of himself at this time, "I knew how to study and I turned it into things I wanted to know." Latin and Greek were not among the things he wanted to know but the natural sciences were, as also the best of English literature, particularly the poets. He also was eager to improve his public speaking by debating. In effect he devised an elective system of his own long before any such system had ever been heard of. He soon won recognition as the leading debater of the college and was elected the president of the debating, the Athenian Society, a post usually held by the presumptive valedictorian of the class, an honor which Henry Ward was never in any danger of achieving. He said of himself that he once stood next to the head of his class but that was when they were standing in a circle. In that day of Association football, before American Intercollegiate football was introduced, a classmate called him one of the college's best football kickers.

He threw himself with zest into the religious work of the college and spoke and prayed at prayer-meetings with great constancy and earnestness. He also began to give religious talks at little sequestered churches and schoolhouses, which would have been called sermons, had he been a minister. These talks he later referred to as like "the faint peepings of very young birds." When a revival overtook the college he had his second conversion with most devastating effects. He became morbidly conscious of his sinful state but didn't know what to do about it. In despair he went to the Reverend Mr.

Humphrey, but he dared not even try to help him for fear of interfering with the workings of God's providence. Poor Henry lived in black desperation. His tendency to melancholy, which in his father and grandfather was out-and-out hypochondria, temporarily engulfed him.

No man was ever more successful in making many warm friends and a few equally warm enemies. One of these enemies he made almost immediately after entering college. The usual friction between freshmen and sophomores became so extreme that a mass meeting of the entire college was called to discuss the situation. A leading junior made a speech in which he attacked the freshmen with scorn and vituperation. A young freshman by the name of Henry Ward Beecher, a marked man as the son of Dr. Lyman Beecher, arose as a volunteer defender of his class, demolished the junior's arguments and held them up to ridicule. The junior vowed vengeance and forty years later he got it. At the time of Beecher's trial he was a rich New York lawyer and Tammany politician. He did effective voluntary service for Beecher's accusers.

One day Henry learned that a professor was to call upon him in his room to give him some improving counsel. The professor was almost seven feet tall, very lanky and solemn-looking, but he was a Yankee with a submerged sense of humor. Henry hastily removed from his room all the chairs except one, the legs of which had been sawed off in the middle. Then he climbed into the circular desk which he had made for himself and awaited his caller. When the professor entered Henry started to clamber out of his desk, but his caller told him to keep his seat. Then Henry invited his guest to be seated. With apprehensive glances at the inexplicably low chair, the professor gradually lowered himself into it until his anxious face peered out from between his knees. Blinking solemnly at Henry for a moment, he burst into a roar of laughter and after some pleasant banter he left him without the improving counsel.

One day, when Henry was at home in Boston on vacation, he was sent to deliver a message to a Mr. Brown. He was a bit vague about the location, but finally rang the bell of what he thought was the house. A forbidding-looking woman opened the door and in reply to his inquiry, "Does Mr. Brown live here, ma'am?" she shouted, "No he don't!" and slammed the door. Henry walked slowly down the path but on reaching the street he turned, walked rapidly back to the house, and again rang the bell. As soon as the ill-natured woman, now in a rage, opened the door again he shouted, "Who said he did!" and sped for the street.

Henry and his friends went one night to hear a phrenologist lecture. They went "to scoff," but Henry at least "remained to pray." While he did not swallow it "hook, line and sinker," he nevertheless found it very stimulating and with enough truth in it to be definitely helpful in the study of human nature which was already becoming one of his major studies. He adopted its terminology, formed a phrenology club and so interested his brother, Charles, who was in Bowdoin College, that he organized a similar club there. This pseudo-science led Henry into the actual sciences of physiology and biology which he followed for the rest of his life.

In preparing a debate for the Athenian Society on Colonization, Henry became convinced that colonization was a futile impossibility as a solution of the problem of slavery, that enforced migration, even if possible, would be almost as great a wrong as slavery itself and that emancipation was the only possible just and final solution. So through this college debate he took the ground upon which he ever afterward stood as an anti-slavery leader.<sup>4</sup>

During his sophomore year, Henry's friend and classmate, Ebenezer Bullard, took him and another classmate home with

<sup>4</sup>He did not in fact take part in this debate because he was elected president of the society before the debate took place. So he presided but did not debate.

him during a vacation. The three youths walked the fifty miles to the home of Dr. Artemus Bullard in West Sutton, Massachusetts, in order to save expense. Henry fell in love with Ebenezer's handsome sister, Eunice. The next winter Henry persuaded Eunice's unsuspecting father to allow him to tutor her in Latin. By a happy chance he had been engaged to teach a district school in a neighboring hamlet to that in which Eunice was teaching, and he boarded at the same house in which Eunice boarded. Amherst College, as was the custom of the day, had a very long winter vacation so that the students could earn money by teaching in the district schools. As their Latin lessons drew to a close, Henry slipped a note into Eunice's grammar, asking her if she would accompany him as a missionary to the West? Eunice finally surrendered to this unusual proposal. When he went to her parents for their consent, the Doctor wrathfully refused on the ground that they were "a couple of babies who didn't know their own minds." But the indignant father, like his daughter, finally capitulated to the persuasive powers of the young man of whom he had said, "He's smart. If he lives, he'll make his mark in the world." The engagement was confirmed by Henry walking to Brattleboro, Vermont, and giving a lecture on temperance for which he received a fee of five dollars. With this he bought Eunice an engagement ring, which later served as her wedding ring also.

With an earlier fee of ten dollars for a lecture on temperance Henry had bought the works of Edmund Burke, which formed the foundation of his library and proved invaluable to him in his career as a public speaker. Most of his spare dollars from then on went into books for his library with the result that when he died he left ten thousand well and carefully selected volumes.

In Henry's junior year, although his board was only one dollar and twenty-five cents a week and in spite of what he earned in teaching and lecturing and of his economy in walk-

ing the one hundred miles to and from his home in Boston during his vacations, his father's circumstances became so straightened that he feared he might have to take him out of college. After discussing with his wife their apparently hopeless financial condition, Lyman Beecher exclaimed with his usual optimism, "Well, the Lord always has taken care of me and I am sure He always will." The next morning a one-hundred-dollar bill arrived in the morning's mail as a thank-offering from a parishioner for the conversion of one of his children. So Henry's education was continued and his father was confirmed in his cheerful improvidence.

Finally came Henry's graduation in 1834, for which his devoted and adoring sister, Harriet, came way on from Cincinnati, traveling by boat and by stage. She must have drawn with typical Beecher recklessness upon her slender savings. Henry had no commencement part, he had spent too much time on temperance, phrenology, science, English literature, debating, revivals and perhaps on Eunice, and too little on Latin and Greek to earn the necessary grades.

Henry after graduation returned with his sister to Cincinnati where he entered Lane Theological Seminary of which his father had for two years been the president. He was then twenty-one. Here he proceeded to treat the regular theological course just as he had treated the regular classical course at Amherst, as secondary to his own plans for study.

His life had little of the cloistered quiet of the theological student. He painted in cream color his father's brick house; he made the woods back of the house resound with his oratorical rehearsals as did his brother, Charles, with his singing; he taught a Sunday-school class of young ladies in his father's church in which he tried out his theories; he sang in the choir of the church; he had himself sworn in as a deputy sheriff after pro-slavery mobs had destroyed Birney's printing presses, and patrolled the streets of the city heavily armed and quite ready to shoot, and he became for six months the

Editor of the *Cincinnati Journal* in which he wrote straight from the shoulder anti-slavery editorials, which were regarded as dangerous by conservative citizens, even by those who agreed with the young editor's views. He frankly stated that he took the position because it paid forty dollars a month, which his finances badly needed.

Apparently, the only prescribed course which aroused any real interest or enthusiasm was that on the Bible with his future brother-in-law, Professor Calvin Ellis Stowe. Henry not only greatly admired him as a teacher but conceived an ardent affection for him as a man, which proved life-long. "He led me," he said, "to an examination of the Bible and to an analysis of its several portions, not as parts of a machine, formal and dead, but as a body of truth instinct with God, warm with divine and human sympathies, clothed with language adapted to their fit expression and to be understood as similar language used for similar ends in every-day life." He ever afterward followed Professor Stowe's methods in his constant study of the Scriptures.

Doctor Beecher was always under fire by the heresy hunters of the Old-School Presbyterians and Henry helped him fight them. He became expert in theological technicalities, not so much because of any interest in them as to equip himself to champion his father. The unscrupulous vindictiveness with which his father was hounded filled him with disgust. He decided that theological controversies were both futile and wicked and that he would keep out of them at all costs.

During the first two years of his course he had many doubts about his religious faith and misgivings as to whether he should preach, or if he should decide to, whether he could ever be licensed to preach. As a reaction from this skepticism came his third and final conversion. He was walking through the fields on a May morning when, as he described it, "There rose up before me a view of Jesus as the Saviour of sinners—not of saints, but of sinners unconverted, before they were

any better—because they were so bad and needed so much; and that view has never gone from me. . . ." In describing this experience in later years he added: ". . . when I found that it was Christ's nature to lift men out of their weakness to strength, out of impurity to goodness, out of everything low and debasing to superiority, I felt that I had found a God. I shall never forget the feelings with which I walked forth that morning. The golden pavements will never feel to my feet as then the grass felt to them; and the singing of the birds in the woods—for I roamed in the woods . . ." Presumably both the spoken and the written words of his sister, Catharine, had helped to prepare his mind for this revelation.

After three years, in 1837, Henry graduated from Lane Seminary. He had finished his formal education, if anything he ever did could be called formal. He had mastered the mysteries of theology largely to please and help his father, he had followed with enthusiasm his self-appointed course of study, and he had found his religious faith through spontaneous revelation and conversion. And now he was ready and eager to tackle his life-work with the same objective and the same singleness of purpose as had his father before him. Henry's aim was to raise men to their highest potentialities, to give them lives rich and full, both here and hereafter. This he sought to do by preaching the love of God and expounding the life of Christ as the ideal for men. That was a theme then so new and original as greatly to excite his hearers and alarm the orthodox. His two inexhaustible sources were to be the Bible and human nature.

## CHAPTER XVII

### HENRY WARD BEECHER

#### FRONTIER PREACHER

AFTER Henry Ward had graduated from Lane Seminary, he preached for a few Sundays in Covington, Kentucky. A strong-minded Yankee woman from Lawrenceburg, Indiana, heard him and decided he was the man for the little church in Lawrenceburg, of which she was trustee, deacon, treasurer and general factotum. They had no minister. After the service she went up to meet the fledgling minister and asked him if he would preach for them as a candidate. He agreed and did preach for them a few Sundays later. The young man was so tense with apprehension and so alarmed by what seemed to him a vast congregation, of one hundred people, that his sermon was a failure. Had it not been for this determined woman's faith in him, that would have been the end of the matter. She insisted that he be given further opportunity to be heard. He preached twice again, both times acceptably, and was then given a unanimous call to the church, which he accepted. He said years later, that this Yankee woman permanently established his faith in the capacity and duty of women to engage in affairs outside the home.

Lawrenceburg, at the junction of the Ohio and Miami Rivers twenty miles from Cincinnati, was a dreary unsubstantial river town of about fifteen hundred inhabitants, with four large distilleries as its chief industry. It was situated on low-lying malarial plains and was flooded by the spring freshets. The houses were mostly temporary shacks strung along treeless and gardenless mud and dust streets after the manner of the shabbier suburbs of a large city. The inhabitants were

prepared at a moment's notice to pull up stakes and move on and seemed only interested in making money while they remained. Beecher said of this church in a sermon in later years: ". . . the flock which I found gathered in the wilderness consisted of twenty persons. Nineteen of them were women and the other was nothing." All except two of them supported themselves by their hands. Naturally they were too poor to pay their minister a living wage. The woman treasurer agreed to try to raise a salary of two hundred and fifty dollars. The Home Missionary Society agreed to contribute one hundred and fifty dollars more. As a matter of fact, in spite of the best efforts of the Yankee woman and the best intentions of the Home Missionary Society neither amount was ever paid either promptly or in full.

The young preacher became, perforce, his own sexton. He opened and closed and swept out the church. Finding there were no lamps, he went to Cincinnati and, raising the money among his friends, bought some. And when bought and installed he had to fill, trim and light them. His people had previously held to the old custom of having the hymns "lined out," as they called it, by one member. This required one book only. Finding there were no hymn-books, he likewise raised the money and bought them. The young minister did not consult the church about this innovation because he had observed that a change made is much less likely to arouse opposition than a change proposed. "I did all but come to hear myself preach—that, they had to do," he commented.

As soon as he was settled the lonely young lover was naturally eager to be married. He had not seen his Eunice since he graduated from Amherst. He wrote her an ardent letter urging that they be married as soon as he was ordained. And then he rushed East, almost overtaking his letter, to plead that they be married at once without waiting for his ordination. He had not much to offer Eunice in a worldly way but after all he had exactly what she had promised to share with

him—the life of a missionary preacher in the West. His friends in Cincinnati were out of patience with him. It was beyond them why a young man of promise should want to bury himself in such an abysmal hole, especially a son of Dr. Lyman Beecher. But he himself was radiantly content, he was never so happy as when he was beginning at the bottom and struggling to make something out of nothing. His was the philosophy of the greatest of the slaves, whom later he helped to free—Booker T. Washington—who said: “The best place to begin is at the bottom because then, if you move at all, you must move up.”

He reached West Sutton, Massachusetts, as rapidly as the primitive means of locomotion of the time permitted. His letter arrived in the morning and he in the evening. His enthusiasm carried all before it. His fiancée and her parents agreed to an immediate marriage, August third, three days earlier than was planned. Henry and his bride-to-be made their own wedding cake,—Henry picking over and stoning the raisins, beating the eggs and keeping the family laughing as he worked.

On reaching Lawrenceburg, they moved into the house of a parishioner, as boarders. The bridegroom was presently called to attend a convocation of the Presbyterian Church in Cincinnati. While he was gone, a death in the family with whom they were boarding made it necessary for them to move. The bride could find no other boarding place. She was forced to look for rooms. All she could find within their scanty means was two unbelievably filthy rooms over a livery-stable near the bank of the Miami River. These could be had for forty dollars a year, which was all they could afford, but they were unfurnished and the young couple had no furniture. In this dilemma, she followed her husband to Cincinnati and joined him at “Father Beecher’s” house. A hurried family council was called to consider their plight. When the groom was asked how much cash he had with which to begin house-

keeping, he sheepishly replied, "Sixty-eight cents." Father Beecher agreed to contribute a bed, Mrs. Beecher a scant supply of worn linen, George a stove. There was then collected from sympathetic friends and neighbors a further supply of second-hand household equipment sufficient to begin rudimentary housekeeping. With these spoils the couple returned to Lawrenceburg and to the two highly uninviting rooms over the livery-stable. After hours on his hands and knees, with soap and water, the young minister reduced the foully begrimed floors to decency. After days of cleaning and ingenious devising of ways and means, including a book-case for Henry Ward's library, which he made out of the packing-cases in which the books had been shipped, they moved in their odds and ends of furniture and began house-keeping. Eunice sold a cloak for thirty dollars to cover the initial cash necessities.

The young minister learned that a neighboring store-keeper, an ill-natured fellow, was vituperatively denouncing him. He resolved to win the man over. He dropped into his store whenever he could and perched on the counter with legs swinging; he made himself as agreeable and entertaining as he knew how. The first few times his efforts evoked only gloomy silence or ill-natured snorts but finally conversation started and in a few weeks they were friends. When the Beechers two years later had to move out of their quarters a week before leaving for their new home in Indianapolis it was this storekeeper who insisted upon their being his guests. Ever after that as long as the old fellow lived he could not mention Beecher without tears coming to his eyes.

When Henry Ward's clothing began to wear out, and he had no money to buy more, one of his parishioners, a judge, gave him his cast-off clothes. These he accepted gratefully but he couldn't help wishing that the judge were robust and well developed like himself, instead of being so thin and *meager*.

After some months he was summoned to be examined before the Oxford Presbytery, the local authoritative body of his denomination. The Presbyterians were dividing into Old School and New School. This was an Old-School body controlled by Scotch-Presbyterians, the most rigid and unrelenting Calvinists. The son of the New-School leader, whose heresy trial had undoubtedly precipitated the schism in the church, knew there was trouble ahead. He described the ordeal in a letter to his brother, George:

"I went some sixty miles up into Preble County, near Eaton, before Oxford Presbytery. [He went on horseback and narrowly escaped drowning in fording a swollen river.] Presented my papers. Father Craigh was appointed to squeak the questions. They examined me to their hearts' content. I was a model to behold and so were they! Elders opened their mouths, gave their noses a fresh blowing, fixed their spectacles and hunched forward on their seats. The ministers clinched their confessions of faith with desperate fervor and looked unutterably orthodox, while Graham and a few friendly ones looked a little nervous, not knowing how the youth would stand fire. There he sat, the young candidate begotten of a heretic, nursed at Lane, but with such a name and parentage and education, what remarkable modesty, extraordinary meekness, and how deferential to the eminently acute questioners who sat gazing upon the prodigy! Certainly this was a bad beginning. Having predetermined that I should be hot and full of confidence, it was somewhat awkward, truly, to find such gentleness and teachableness!"

"Then came the examination: 'Will the mon tell us in what relation Adam stood to his posterity?' 'In the relation of a federal head.' 'What do you mean by a federal head?' 'A head with whom God made a covenant for all his posterity.' Then questions on all the knotty points. 'Still the wonder grew,' for the more the lad was examined the more ~~irrigidly~~ ~~orthodoxly~~ did he grow, until they began to fear he was 'a leetle' too orthodox

upon some points. The vote on receiving me was unanimous! Well, they slept upon it. Next day, while settling the time of my ordination, Prof. McArthur of Oxford, moved to postpone the business to take up some resolutions. In the first they sincerely adhered to the Old School Pby. Assembly; second, required that all licentiates and candidates under their care should do the same or be no longer such. I declined acknowledging it to be the true one. Father Craigh (whom my orthodoxy had softened) said they would give me six months to think and decide, and I might continue to preach in their bounds. I refused and they turned me out and gave me my papers back again. I asked them what the duty of my church was. They replied that it was vacant—just what they had to say, and just what I determined they should say. I drove home forthwith; got back on Saturday. On Sunday recounted from the pulpit the doings of Pby. and declared them vacant if they continued under Oxford; appointed a meeting for Wednesday P. M. for their action. By a unanimous vote they withdrew from Oxford and declared themselves an Independent Pbyn. Ch. . . .”

That the son of Lyman Beecher, who was a heretic in the eyes of this Old-School Presbytery, the son who was surely no more orthodox than his father, should have been acceptably orthodox to this body, would seem inconceivable. Nothing written by or about Henry Ward Beecher satisfactorily explained it. Therefore, we are thrown upon conjecture. My own theory is that he regarded theological questions as of such insignificance, compared to preaching the Gospel of Christ and saving men, that he, perhaps unconsciously, justified verbal concessions in these matters of relative indifference rather than to put himself in a position where he might find it impossible to carry out his mission in life. When a question of real importance arose, and he was asked to take his stand with the Old School and against the New, he instantly refused even to consider the matter.

Further light upon his attitude in such matters is shown by a letter which he wrote his brother, Charles, some years later when the latter was about to begin his ministry at Fort Wayne, Indiana. "Preach little doctrine," he said, "except what is of mouldy orthodoxy; keep all your improved breeds, your short-horned Durhams, your Berkshires, etc. away off to pasture. They will get fatter and nobody will be scared. Take hold of the most practical subjects; popularize your sermons. I do not ask you to change yourself, but for a time, while captious critics are lurking, adapt your mode so as to insure that you shall be rightly understood." Was it not this "mouldy orthodoxy" which Henry Ward furnished to the "captious critics" of the Oxford Presbytery?

So the humble little Lawrenceburg church, when forced to choose between orthodoxy, regularity, continued membership in their Presbytery and their young minister, instantly chose the latter. And he, instead of chafing under the hardships and limitations of his diminutive parish, went on his way rejoicing. He often said afterward that he was never happier in his life. "I felt that it was an unspeakable privilege to be anywhere and speak of Christ. I had very little theology—that is to say, it slipped away from me. I knew it but it did not do me any good. It was like an armor which had lost its buckles and would not stick on. But I had one vivid point—the realization of the love of God in Christ Jesus. And I tried to work that up in every possible shape for my people. And it was the secret of all the little success I had in the early part of my ministry. I remember I used to ride out in the neighborhood and preach to the destitute and that my predominant feeling was thanksgiving that God had permitted me to preach the unsearchable riches of His grace." Of his early preaching he said that he was handicapped by being the son of Lyman Beecher because people insisted upon comparing his preaching with his father's.

Within two years this young John the Baptist began to attract attention beyond the boundaries of his wilderness community. He was at length called to the Second Presbyterian Church of Indianapolis, the capital of the state, at a salary of six hundred dollars. Incredible as it may seem, that was good pay for a minister in that day. He declined. He had grown fond of his rough and simple people, and they of him. He disapproved of short pastorates and had no faith in rolling stones. Some months later the call was renewed. Again he declined. When the call was renewed a third time and persons in whose judgment he had great confidence urged him that it was his duty to undertake the larger work, he finally decided to lay the matter before the Presbytery, a New-School Presbytery which his church had joined when they had to withdraw from the Old-School body in order to keep their young minister. The Presbytery deciding he should accept the Indianapolis call, he did so.

The Second Presbyterian Church had been founded by a small group of men and women, about two dozen, who were New School in their beliefs, and had hence seceded from the Old-School First Presbyterian Church. They had no church building but conducted their services in the hall of a seminary building. Indianapolis was a town of between three and four thousand inhabitants, called a city because it was the capital of the state. Its so-called streets were nothing but unpaved roads noted for the depth and adhesiveness of their mud, and from which the stumps of the pioneers had never been fully cleared.

The young minister stirred up a revival almost immediately during which nearly one hundred people were converted and joined the church. In writing of this time in a sketch of the church one of the members said that "he [Beecher] is remembered by some of the congregation as plunging through the wet streets, his trousers stuffed in his muddy boot-legs, earnest, untiring, swift; with a merry heart, a glowing face

and a helpful word for every one; the whole day preaching Christ to the people where he could find them and at night preaching still where the people were sure to find him."

Even after the revival was over, he settled down to a regular routine of preaching twice on Sunday and five times during the week in different parts of the town. During the summer he had a three months' leave of absence in order to do missionary work throughout the state. He rode on horseback and preached daily on the love of God to men as manifested in the life of Jesus Christ.

Shortly after coming to Indianapolis Beecher became highly dissatisfied with his preaching. It was crowding the small hall just as it had the little church in Lawrenceburg but it was not, he felt, having sufficient power in actually changing the lives of the people. He determined to study how the Apostles had preached and try to apply the same methods. He found they laid a foundation of historical truth common to them and their listeners and that this mass of familiar truth was then concentrated upon their hearers with an intense personal application and appeal—not in scholastic and scholarly language but in the language of every day. He decided to follow this method and to present these truths in the language of the modern Hoosiers who sat before him instead of that of the ancient Hebrews. With the first sermon preached by this method he converted a dozen people. From this mode of presenting ancient truth in current setting and language he never departed. It brought him his popularity and success. It also brought him hatred and trouble because it not only aroused the antagonism of the wicked but offended the prejudices of conservative and conventional good people.

In one of his missionary journeys his horse reared when crossing the Miami River and threw him into the water. A few days later a Baptist minister came up to him in a group and said banteringly, "Well, Brother Beecher, I've heard of

your immersion in the river. I thought you would adopt our custom of baptism in the end."

"Haven't adopted it," rapped out Beecher, "I was immersed by a horse—not an ass."

Among his friends were as many Old-School Presbyterians as New-School. He had, in fact, friends of all shades of belief including none. Among the latter was an agnostic shoemaker, or infidel as he was then called, with whom the young minister had long friendly arguments. With his father's Old-School enemies and their sons he declined to continue the argument.

Writing of the quarrel between the Old School and the New in a letter now in the possession of his granddaughter,<sup>1</sup> he said:

"I had early been interested in science and I was convinced God had two Revelations in this world, one of the Book and one of the Rock, and I meant to read them both . . . this often brought suspicion upon me. . . . When the ministers said, 'You are not orthodox,' I said, 'Very well, I am out on other business. I hear a call that has been sounding down the ages for two thousand years: "Follow me, I will make you fishers of men." I am not a fisher of ideas, of books nor of sermons, but a fisher of men.'"

Soon the seminary hall was outgrown and a church building erected. In this he insisted upon a platform in the midst of his congregation instead of the customary lofty pulpit placed high up on one side of the church—what he called "a swallow's nest pulpit."

He did not hesitate to denounce from the pulpit individuals who he thought deserved it. One day a man notorious for his brutality shocked the community by an act of unusual cruelty even for him. The next Sunday Beecher denounced

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<sup>1</sup>Annie Beecher Scoville.

this act in his sermon. Monday morning, happening to pass the hotel in which the fellow lived, he met him pistol in hand. With a stream of oaths he asked the preacher if he had attacked him from his pulpit. Upon Beecher's acknowledging that he had he pointed the pistol at him and shouted, "You take that back, damn you, or I'll shoot you in your tracks!"

"Shoot away," answered Beecher calmly as he leisurely walked on. The man followed him for a few paces with curses and threats but there was no shooting.

At another time, as he was leaving the house of a woman and her daughter who had been converted at a revival meeting in his church, he met the husband and father just outside the house. The man, who had a violent hatred of churches and ministers, told him with a barrage of abusive epithets never to let him catch him visiting his house again. Beecher replied without heat that he most certainly never would until he himself invited him. A year or two later the man became a candidate for sheriff when Beecher, to the man's stupefaction, helped him to be elected. After the election the sheriff came to Beecher with confused but sincere apologies and urged him to call and see them. This Beecher did and the sheriff became and remained one of his admirers and defenders.

Drinking, gambling and immorality flourished in the little city with typical frontier luxuriance. Beecher was outraged at the number of originally decent young people who were being lured into the vortex of vice. He made a study of conditions and gave a series of twelve lectures to young men in which he described the methods used for their undoing by those who were fattening on commercialized vice. Perhaps the two most striking of these lectures dealt with prostitution and gambling. The one on prostitution, called *The Strange Woman*, was an extraordinary example of the sentimentality and bathos of a frontier community and the other, *Gambling and Gamblers*, of crude but powerful realism.

He concluded the lecture on gambling by depicting four scenes in the downward course of a young man who takes up gambling: from the first, in which he merely takes a hand in a poker game to be accommodating, to the last, where he is being hung for having murdered a fellow-gambler whom he had shot in a brawl in a wretched river-side gambling hell. In order to make his descriptions true to life he cultivated the acquaintance of a gambler from whom he drew all the details. In the discussion which followed this lecture a young man asked cynically, "How could you describe a gambling hell so accurately if you had never been in one?" To which Beecher replied, "How could you know it was accurate if you had never been in one?" These scenes have often been compared to Hogarth's *Rake's Progress*.

In connection with his exposure of drinking and its association with prostitution he was attacked in the *Indiana State Journal* in 1846 by a leading distiller who said, among other things, "Mr. Beecher's great familiarity with all such places [gambling houses and houses of prostitution] from his remarks that 'he had heard my arguments in the streets, in groceries and among sporting men' etc. will lead the public, I fear, to think he is too familiar with such scenes. He is well known to be an eccentric genius."

"Was not her cradle as pure as ever a loved infant pressed?" he said in *The Strange Woman*. "Love soothed its cries. Sisters watched its peaceful sleep, and a mother pressed it fondly to her bosom! . . . How often did she put the wonder-raising questions to her mother of God and Heaven and the dead—as if she had seen heavenly things in a vision! . . . ."

These lectures created great excitement. A wave of indignation swept through the community. A citizens' committee was organized and the worst of the vice venders were driven out of town. Beecher was urged by many friends to publish

the lectures and finally agreed to revise them for publication. On reading them over he was so disgusted with their inferiority that he took up the manuscript and "fired it across the room and under the book-case." Finally, however, they were published and had a large sale both in this country and in England. This is said to have been the first book by an Indiana author to be published in England. It would be interesting to know whether Beecher's outburst of disgust was because his forward-reaching mind glimpsed that posterity would regard as bathotic drivel such passages as that quoted?

As a man he was intensely absorbed in the doings of his time and subject to its limitations. As a prophet he had glimpses into the future. He plunged head over heels into everything that was going on about him. W. R. Halloway in his *History of Indianapolis* described the preacher at a fire. "Mr. Beecher was one of the foremost in carrying the hose-pipe right into the burning portion of the house, and after two hours work, came out a mass of soot and dirt and ice and blood from his cut hands, but with the fire subdued." He spurned the immunity from fire service which was granted to the clergy.

When Henry Ward Beecher visited Indianapolis in later life on a lecture tour he said reminiscently:

"The little ten-foot house in which I then [first] lived has gone. But the house which I built and lived in for a few months before my removal still stands and is interesting to me from the fact that I worked on it with my own hands and painted it myself—mostly after evening meetings were over, often painting till after ten o'clock, my wife holding the lantern for me while I painted.

"I had a small garden also which would cut a poor figure by the side of stylish Eastern gardens but I suspect few gentlemen with their gorgeous grounds and gardens extract half as much deep delight as I did from my two city lots. Too poor to hire labor I was my own

gardener and being an enthusiast I always planned twice as much as I could perform well. . . .

"In some sense my garden was a missionary work. The whole city was given over to politics and money making. I remember but two enthusiasts, Dr. Mears and Mrs. Bobbs. I lived to see a very general taste for gardening spring up, in part from the education and growing refinement of the city, through its excellent schools, and I hope also in some small measure from my labors. . . ."

". . . During my residence in Indianapolis," he said in a letter to a friend, "every one kept pigs—everybody kept them in the street. . . . A good friend presented me with a pair and in two years I found myself owner of a few children of the street not famous for good conduct. Their skill in opening gates, digging into a field from under the rails or squeezing through them was good evidence of the reasoning powers of pigs.

"My slow and wearisome labors, weakened as I was by chills and fevers, were provokingly neutralized by the caprices of a cunning old sow, who every day or two would get into the field in spite of all nails and strings, latches or hinges. The chills made a night's warfare dangerous for me. But one midnight I heard her eating and crunching vigorously among my corn, salads and strawberries and I could endure it no longer. Springing from my bed, omitting toilet formalities (a hot Western summer night) I seized my gun and dashed out after her. Away she scampered down the garden and away went I down the central path to be ready for her return. She stopped and so did I. The night was dark. I could see nothing, hear nothing and it began to strike me that I had rather the worst of it and only needed a spectator to appear decidedly ludicrous. Just then with a sharp snort she dashed by me on the left. I took aim with my ears and fired off in successive volleys. The squeal which each produced was music to me. She left the garden and never returned nor do I remember to have met her on the street."

One of Beecher's recreations at this time was the reading and rereading of Loudon's *Encyclopædia of Horticulture, Agriculture and Architecture*. This he did, for the most part, after evening meetings in order to quiet his nerves so he could sleep when he got into bed. Armed with this combination of horticultural and agricultural theory and practise he accepted the offer of the *Indiana State Journal* to edit for them a supplement—published separately, called *The Western Farmer and Gardener*.

"Mr. Beecher got a large amount of interesting information into it which makes it very readable to this day," said Jacob Piatt Dunn in his *History of Greater Indianapolis*. "He showed unusual newspaper enterprise. One of his strokes was issuing a double number for Oct. 19th, 1846, with a complete almanac for 1847. He explained that 'almost every family purchases an almanac of some kind and he proposed to furnish one in which uncouth wood-cuts and pointless anecdotes were replaced by useful information.'

"He chatted, joked and romped," he added, "until he convinced the public that a man could be a Presbyterian preacher and still really enjoy himself. He would alarm the carpenters who were working on his house by 'skinning the cat' on the exposed joints; and when exhausted would lie down on the grass and work on a sermon."

During his early years in Indianapolis Henry Ward persuaded his brother, Charles, and his young wife to rent the cottage next door and take charge of the music of his church. Charles, driven to despair and a state of mind bordering upon agnosticism by his inability to accept the views of Jonathan Edwards on the freedom of the will, had given up all thought of entering the ministry and become a musician, specializing in church music. He helped with the garden and finally was persuaded to teach a Sunday-School class in the church. In

teaching the life of Christ to his class he was seized with a desire to preach the fatherhood of God, the brotherhood of man and the love of Christ and let theology take care of itself. At length he was offered a church at Fort Wayne, Indiana, and Lyman Beecher, at the age of seventy, after a seventy-mile horse-back ride through a wilderness known as "the black swamp," arrived covered with mud but triumphant to see another son conform to the ardent longings of a dead mother and a living father.

Slavery had become the most red-hot controversial question of the day. The Abolitionists were regarded by practically all persons of good social standing as dangerous incendiaries. They were looked upon very much as are the Reds to-day. One of the elders of Beecher's own church had threatened, "If an Abolitionist comes here I'll head a mob and put him down."

Beecher himself was not an Abolitionist and never became one, although he was and ever remained a strong anti-slavery man. The difference between an Abolitionist and an anti-slavery man was one of method—not of purpose. William Lloyd Garrison and Charles Sumner were Abolitionists; William H. Seward and Abraham Lincoln were anti-slavery men as were all the Beechers. In notes for a debate in his oratorical society in the seminary Henry Ward had said of the Abolitionists: "They have produced complete *reaction* so far from aiding the cause & convincing the South, they have *driven* them through every middle ground onto the extreme of holding broadly and entirely that slavery is *right*, sanctioned by religion, ordained by nature, and essential to the successful progress of a republic—profitable—not immoral—desirable and positively needful."

The New-School Presbytery to which Beecher's church belonged, being dominantly anti-slavery in sentiment, requested the ministers of its churches to preach one sermon a year against slavery. In spite of the pro-slavery sentiments of

some of his members and the fear of the subject of a much greater number Beecher preached three sermons on slavery. In the first he described slavery in ancient times, particularly among the Hebrews. In the next he took up slavery at the time of Christ and the New Testament and in the final sermon, he treated the inherent immorality of slavery. This was typical of his discreet way of doing a bold thing. By the time he reached his concluding sermon even his most hostile hearers had been in a measure disarmed. But in spite of the gradual approach the final sermon made a sensation and there was much angry muttering. And there might indeed have been some overt act of hostility had not Justice McLean of the United States Supreme Court, who heard the sermon, said to a angry crowd who were discussing it in the lobby of the hotel where the politicians stayed: "If every minister in the United States would be as faithful it would be a great advance in settling this question."

The chills and fever referred to in the letter about the pigs were the bane of this western country in that day. The Beechers had suffered severely from them in Lawrenceburg, but they had been assured that Indianapolis had a more healthful climate. To their consternation they realized soon after their arrival that this optimistic opinion was based solely upon the prejudice of local partiality.

Late in 1846 Eunice Beecher said in a letter to her sister-in-law, Harriet Beecher Stowe:

"My heart is almost broken by this year's trials [the eldest son, George, had died not long after the young uncle after whom he was named had accidentally shot himself]. Excepting when my kind husband is near me, I hardly know myself, so full of wretchedness and anguish is every thought and feeling. . . .

"I have been quite sick and do not get strong ~~as~~ fast as I'd like. If you were to step in, I think you would have some trouble to recognize your sister in the thin

faced, grey haired, toothless old woman you would find here. . . .

"We have had more sickness than ever before in one year. He [Henry] has himself had more ill spells than he has had since we were married. . . . Then he has looked after every stick of timber that has gone into our new house. . . . Then, he has had more public duties devolving upon him than usual, aside from those strictly belonging to him in his church and horticultural matters in general and lots and lots of other things which I have not time to specify if I had the ability."

Some of these public responsibilities which Mrs. Beecher had neither the time nor the ability to enumerate are suggested by Logan's *Annual Indianapolis City Directory* of the period. In this we find that in 1840 Henry Ward Beecher and James Blake were the most prominent founders of the Indiana Horticultural Society. The next year Beecher and Governor Bigger made the principal addresses at the funeral services for President Harrison. Three years later the state made provision for the care of the insane as also for the deaf. The trustees charged with the responsibility were the Governor, the Secretary of State, the State Treasurer and Henry Ward Beecher. He was also a trustee of Wabash College situated at Crawfordsville. These were some of the things he did in spite of death, chills and fever and poverty.

He was the first clergyman in the city to violate the conventions of the cloth by wearing a soft felt hat and indeed a straw hat in hot weather, which was still more of a departure from clerical convention. His salary of six hundred dollars (later raised to eight hundred) proved inadequate to the expenses of a growing family. There were now three children: Harriet, Henry and Catey. And the adequacy of the salary was not increased by the fact that there were always shortages and irregularity in its payment.

During Henry Ward's early years in Indianapolis Lyman Beecher said in a letter to his son, George: "Henry, though so recently established at Indianapolis, is beginning to be felt not only at home in the power of the Holy Spirit which attends his labors, but abroad as a man of piety, talents and power in the churches and in the capital of the State."

In the spring of 1847 he accepted an invitation to address an anniversary meeting of the American Home Missionary Society in New York. While there he received a call to be the associate minister of the Park Street Church in Boston. That was then the second most powerful evangelical church in the country. He declined. Hardly had he done so than he was waited upon by a group of gentlemen representing a newly organized church in Brooklyn—a church which had as yet no church building, no name and only a handful of members. They had, however, great persistence. They had set their hearts on securing for their nascent church the young Indianapolis preacher. They had written him and he had declined. They instigated his invitation to address the Home Missionary Society. They wanted him at hand where they could more readily bring pressure to bear upon him. And pressure they did bring to bear without stint but the young man resisted and fled from them and returned to Indianapolis. There these persistent men followed him and finally secured his consent to come to them. Strong as their arguments were he would probably have continued to resist them had he not been haunted by his anxiety about his suffering, weakened and prematurely aged young wife and had he not remembered the doctor's warning that a change of climate was essential to her recovery.

In his farewell sermon he frankly gave his wife's health as his main reason for leaving. Except potentially, the new field was scarcely larger than the old. The formally organized membership of the new church contained only twenty-one per-

sons, whereas under his leadership the membership of the Indianapolis church had been built up from about two dozen to two hundred and seventy-five. The new church offered him a salary of fifteen hundred dollars, which, taking into account the higher cost of living in a large city, was not much more than the eight hundred dollars he was receiving. But there was one great inducement to a man of his temperament—a chance to begin at the bottom and build up a church in accordance with his own ideals of what a church should be. He was instinctively a pioneer and in a sense there was more pioneering to be done in this incipient Brooklyn church than in Indianapolis.

The nameless church became Plymouth Church. But when he came to move his family to Brooklyn he found himself without the necessary funds. His eight-hundred-dollar salary was over nine hundred dollars in arrears. He had been obliged to borrow five hundred dollars for the immediate necessities of his family. As soon as his Plymouth Church friends learned this situation they raised a fund of one thousand dollars for him to draw upon as needed. Accordingly, the young preacher settled his little family on Brooklyn Heights and prepared to tackle his new and unchartered work with his usual exuberant enthusiasm.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### HENRY WARD BEECHER

#### PREACHER AND ANTI-SLAVERY LEADER

HENRY WARD BEECHER's first sermon in Plymouth Church on October 10, 1847, was a declaration of independence—a challenge to the bold and a warning to the weak. "If you come into this church," he said, as quoted in the Biography by his son and son-in-law, "I want you to understand distinctly that I will wear no fetters; that I will be bound by no precedent; that I will preach the Gospel as I apprehend it, whether men will hear or whether they will forbear, and that I will apply it without stint, and sharply and strongly, to the overthrow of every evil and to the upbuilding of all that is good."

This young preacher, unknown in the East, defiantly announced that he would dynamite the conventions of the day by denouncing slavery, the liquor traffic and every other vested evil. To speak against slavery was about as popular in respectable circles then as to speak against private property is now. With few exceptions the ministers were silent on the subject, the missionary societies were silent, the civic and reform organizations were silent—all organizations were silent which were dependent on the voluntary contributions of the rich and the well-to-do. With few exceptions the rich and the well-to-do, even those who deplored slavery, deprecated still more the agitation for its abolition. They argued that it disturbed the public mind, injured business and really did the slaves harm by arousing their masters to fear and retaliatory measures. This was the atmosphere in which Henry Ward Beecher began to preach against slavery in the East.

A group of the more conservative of his somewhat unconventional parishioners tried to dissuade him. If he would only leave those dangerous topics alone he had the opportunity to build up a tremendous influence for good. If, on the other hand, he defied popular prejudices on the threshold of his eastern career all chance for usefulness might be sacrificed. All these well-meant counsels had upon the headstrong young minister exactly the reverse effect from that intended. "I do not know what it is in me," he said in looking back to this time, "whether it is my father or my mother or both of them—but the moment you tell me that a thing that should be done is unpopular, I am right there, every time."

"How hateful is that religion which says, 'Business is business and politics is politics and religion is religion;' Religion is using everything for God; but many men dedicate business to the Devil and politics to the Devil and shove religion into the cracks and crevices of time and make it the hypocritical out-crawling of their leisure and their laziness." His conception of religion and the function of preaching was at that time something new and startling. To apply literally the teachings of Christ to the affairs of men is always revolutionary. Deliberately to tear down the carefully built up partitions between the "sacred" and the "secular" was highly disturbing to pious complacent slumberers. This distinction between the sacred and the secular was all that saved to respectability some of the more dubious pillars of the churches and it was a comfortable protection to many better men. "His work was to secularize the pulpit, yea, to secularize religion itself, and make it as common and universal as the air we breathe," said John Burroughs. This idea was well enough for John Burroughs but how about the church deacon who had to meet in his business ruthless and unscrupulous competition?

Beecher's preaching did not, indeed, take hold at first. For six months his congregations were sparse. Whether his Beecher unconventionality intensified by his frontier life in the

West shocked the eastern sense of propriety or whether his insistent emphasis on unpopular subjects like slavery alarmed and offended people or whatever may have been the cause people did not at once flock to hear him. His cautious advisers must have felt that he had indeed wrecked on the threshold of his new career his chance for wide influence.

But after six months the congregation began rapidly to increase and continued to enlarge until within two years the auditorium had become hopelessly inadequate. In 1849 the church fortunately burned down and the present church was built in accordance with Beecher's own ideas of what a church should be. The pulpit was placed right in the midst of the congregation so that the minister was in plain view, legs and all, instead of being tucked off in a "sparrow's nest" on the side of a wall. Everything was spacious, comfortable and well lighted, with large church parlors, the first to be built, and no stained-glass windows or architectural adornment of any kind. The auditorium seated over two thousand, and many of the members thought it unnecessarily large. Within a few months it was so over-crowded that its seating capacity had to be enlarged by aisle seats and other devices. It eventually seated twenty-five hundred people comfortably and three thousand could be crowded into it, as they frequently were. From 1850 until Beecher's death thirty-seven years later it was crowded. It came to be a saying, "If you want to hear Henry Ward Beecher preach take the ferry to Brooklyn and then follow the crowd." Visitors stood in line two deep for a couple of blocks waiting to get in. When the announced subject was of special interest, people were grateful for standing room only and hundreds had to be denied even that.

Who made up these crowds? Where did they come from and why did they come? They were made up of all sorts and conditions of men and women from all parts of the city and the country and eventually the world. They represented all shades of religious belief including none. While the rank and

file were little every-day people, there was always a sprinkling of the distinguished and sometimes the great. Beecher would frequently mention the name of some celebrity in the congregation, such as the author of a much read book, a bill under debate in Congress, or the leader of a great cause. This custom now so familiar in places of entertainment was used by Beecher in church. The only people seldom found in a Plymouth Church congregation were the rich and fashionable. They were ever suspicious of Beecher as a dangerous radical.

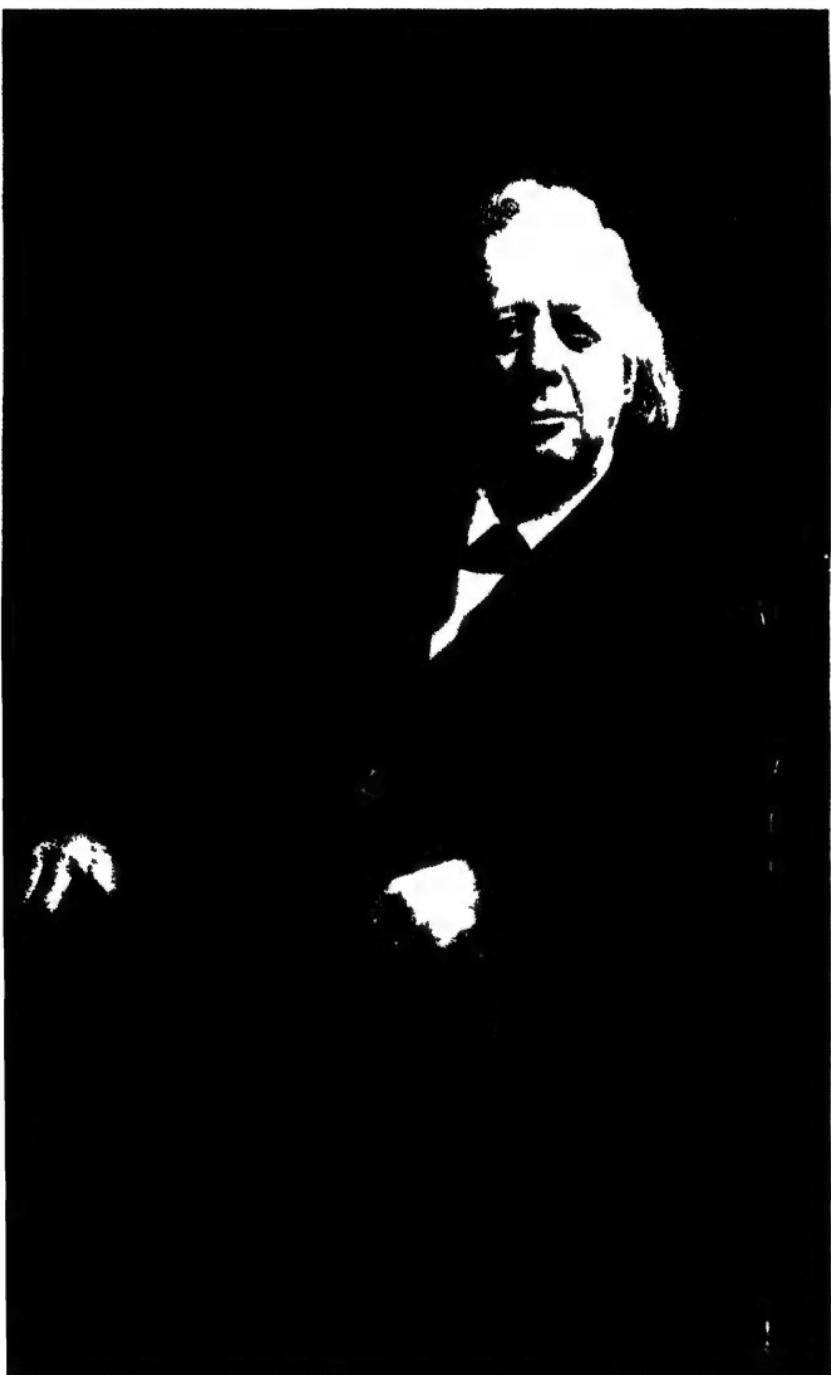
And why did these crowds come? They came because here was a man with a universal message which he brought to the hearts of men through their emotions. We all have hearts and emotions, while comparatively few of us have minds and thoughts. His emotional power, his sentiment and even his sentimentalities, gave him his hold over men. And it was these very qualities which eventually engulfed him in the maze of troubles that later overtook him and which he barely survived.

His old father wrote him: "I thank you for your Thanksgiving sermon; and though I could not write as you do, it is a pleasure to think that perhaps you have breathed an atmosphere with me without which you might not have been able to do it. You cannot conceive how much joy your successful revival labors afford me and that efficient influence you are beginning to exert on the public mind." That was magnanimous in the old man because he had been violently opposed to his son's leaving the West.

The successful "revival labors" to which Doctor Beecher referred brought to conversion and to membership in the church over four hundred people within two years. The common view of the ministers of the day was that if individuals were converted social problems would solve themselves. Although his methods were different Beecher agreed as to the necessity of converting individuals but he did not agree that social problems would solve themselves. While it was, he assented, the duty of a minister to save individuals, he claimed it was equally



Henry Ward Beecher at thirty-four.



Henry Ward Beecher, photogravure by George G. Rockwood, New York,  
Copyright, 1887.

his duty to do his part in trying to remove those evil social conditions which made right living difficult or impossible. In a day when religion and theology were popularly regarded as practically synonymous terms, he defined religion as "right living" and theology as "nothing but logic stiffened and sanctified." When a student told him he was studying theology he commented, "No harm in that if you don't believe it."

He did not become a reformer in addition to being a preacher. He was a reformer because he was a preacher. It was his duty as he saw it not only to save men by bringing them to their best selves but so to change social conditions that they could stay saved—could live religious lives or could live right lives—one and the same thing. Now, the social institution of the day most completely at variance with religion or right living, in Beecher's view, was slavery. In extremest contrast to the supreme importance of each individual as a man with an immortal soul the slave was a mere chattel. The sacred relations of family life were for the slave a farce subject to disruption at the whim of his master. Morality to the slave woman was often impossible. The moral effects of slavery upon the master were almost as baneful as upon the slave. Beecher was hence a tireless enemy of slavery, not as a public question but as a religious question—as a matter of right and wrong.

Just as prejudice against women speaking in public prevented Henry Ward's elder sister, Catharine, from delivering her own speeches, so did disapproval of the more conservative church-members prevent women from speaking in prayer-meetings. Henry Ward Beecher insisted from the first that women should not only be permitted but should be urged to speak in the prayer-meetings of his church. At such a meeting, during his early years at Plymouth Church, a woman made a long, pointless and tedious talk. When she finally took her seat Beecher said: "Nevertheless, I believe that women should speak. We will now sing hymn number five hundred six."

In 1848 Henry Ward Beecher began the practise of selling slaves for liberty, first in the Tabernacle in New York and later from the pulpit of his own church. This he did not only to help individual slaves to win their liberty but to dramatize before the public the evils of slavery very much as did his sister in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. A slave girl of exceptional beauty was sent to a slave market by her white father to be sold. The slave-trader who bought her for twelve hundred dollars was so moved with compassion for her that he gave her the opportunity to purchase her freedom, contributed himself one hundred dollars toward her purchase price, and persuaded a fellow-trader to contribute a like amount. He then allowed her to go to Washington in an effort to raise the remainder. She collected four hundred dollars and then some well-wisher wrote Beecher and asked if he would help her raise the rest. He replied that if the girl would come to Brooklyn he would do so. With much hesitation her owner allowed her to go after she had given him her word of honor that she would return to Richmond if the money were not raised.

During a Sunday morning service after reading from the New Testament, "Then said Jesus unto them, I will ask you one thing: Is it lawful on the Sabbath day to do good, or to do evil? to save life, or destroy it?" Beecher walking to the platform stairs, called, "Come up here, Sarah, and let us all see you."

A young woman rose from a near-by seat and, ascending the steps, sank down embarrassed and trembling with emotion in the nearest chair. The white blood of her father showed in her regular features and high brow. "And this," said Beecher, "is a marketable commodity. Such as she are put into one balance and silver into the other. I reverence woman. For the sake of the love I bore my mother I hold her sacred even in the lowest position and will use every means in my power for her uplifting. What will you do now? May she read her liberty in your eyes? Shall she go out free?" Amid au-

dible sobbing the contribution plates were passed and soon were heaped to overflowing with money and with jewelry. She was free. When Beecher told her so and announced it to the great congregation there was an involuntary outburst of applause. As it subsided he said: "When the old Jews went up to their solemn feasts they made the mountains round about Jerusalem ring with their shouts. I do not approve of an unholy clapping in the house of God, but when a good deed is well done it is not wrong to give an outward expression of our joy."

On another such occasion the slave to be sold was a nine-year-old child called Pinky—"too fair and beautiful for her own good." Amid sobs and intense enthusiasm the money was piled upon the plates for her ransom. Miss Rose Terry, the writer, not having enough money with her, threw in a ring. This ring Mr. Beecher placed upon the child's hand with the comment, "Now remember that this is your freedom-ring."

She was later named Rose Ward—Rose after Miss Terry and Ward after Mr. Beecher—was educated with funds in part contributed by Plymouth Church and became a teacher among her own people. Later she married James Hunt, a Negro lawyer in Washington, D. C., where she lived until her death in 1928. In 1927 there was celebrated in Plymouth Church the eightieth anniversary of the first sermon which Henry Ward Beecher preached there. Dr. J. Stanley Durkee, his present-day successor, invited Mrs. Hunt to attend this celebration as a guest of honor. She came and sat in the same chair in which she had huddled as the child, Pinky, sixty-seven years before. And she gave a talk to the huge assemblage. Her daughter furnished me with a copy of this talk.

"There can be but few of us present," she said, "who will be able to recall Mr. Beecher as he stood upon this rostrum sixty-seven years ago. My own recollection of this time is very meagre, only one incident standing out in my childish mind. My hair was combed back from my

face and held in place with a long curved rubber comb such as children wore at that time. Evidently Mr. Beecher had not noticed this before I was put on the platform, but when he did see it, he came quietly to me, removed the comb and said, 'Never wear anything in your hair except what God put there.' . . . ."

Many people criticized this selling of slaves in a church as unseemly sensationalism. When Henry Ward Beecher was asked his opinion of sensational preaching he remarked: "I say he is the best fisherman who catches the most fish whatever epithets may be flung at him about the kind of bait he uses."

As a result of his study of the Constitution and of slavery Henry Ward Beecher came to believe that slavery and free labor were two absolutely contradictory principles in our social structure that were and would be constantly in conflict until the entire nation became either a free country or a slave empire. He believed that the founders, under the pressure of political necessity, knowingly established in our organic law these two contradictory principles. They did so in the hope and belief that the problem would ultimately solve itself by the dying out of slavery. And undoubtedly this would have happened had not slave labor been made profitable by the invention of the cotton-gin. He anticipated by nearly ten years Abraham Lincoln's prediction of the "irrepressible conflict" and by several weeks William H. Seward's appeal to the "higher law."

In 1850 Henry Clay secured the enactment of a series of compromise measures readjusting the relations between the free and the slave states. California was admitted as a free state as a concession to the North and a drastic fugitive slave law was enacted as a concession to the South. This law not only prohibited the giving of aid to escaping slaves but required every citizen of a free state to do everything in his power to help capture the fugitive and return him to slavery.

This gave to slavery, in place of purely sectional tolerance, a national recognition. It seemed to be a first step toward making it possible for Senator Toombs of Georgia to carry out his boast that he would yet call the roll of his slaves on Bunker Hill. According to the *Cambridge History of American Literature*, “‘Uncle Tom’s Cabin’ was the greatest result of the Fugitive Slave Law.” Writing of this time many years later, in a letter to George Eliot, Harriet Beecher Stowe said:

“I was then in Maine and I well remember one snowy night his [Henry Ward] riding till midnight to see me, and then our talking till near morning what we could do to make headway against the horrid cruelties against the defenceless blacks. . . . Henry told me then that he meant to fight that battle in New York; that he would have a church that would stand by him to resist the tyrannic dictation of Southern slaveholders. I said: ‘I, too, have begun to do something; I have begun a story, trying to set forth the sufferings and wrongs of the slaves.’ ‘That’s right, Hattie,’ he said; ‘finish it and I will scatter it thick as the leaves of Vallambrosa’ and so came ‘Uncle Tom’ and Plymouth Church became a stronghold where the slave always found refuge and a strong helper.”

Beecher was at this period writing his *Star Papers* for *The Independent*, so-called because they were signed with a star merely. He wrote a paper on the Clay compromises and the fugitive slave bill entitled, “Shall We Compromise?” In this he took the position that, while it was possible to compromise conflicting methods, it was impossible to compromise opposite principles. “These oppugnant elements, slavery and liberty, inherent in our political system, animating our Constitution, checkering our public policy, breeding in statesmen opposite principles of government and making our whole wisdom of public legislation on many of the greatest questions cross-eyed and contradictory,—these elements are seeking each other’s life. One or the other must die.” And in conclusion,

with special reference to the fugitive slave provisions, he stated: "The very value of our Union is to be found in those principles of justice, liberty and humanity which inspire it. If these principles must be yielded up to preserve the Union, then a corpse only will be left in our arms, deflowered, lifeless, worthless. . . . Religion and humanity are a price too dear to pay even for the Union."

This paper was read, discussed, praised and denounced throughout the entire country. It first voiced the views which were six years later incorporated in the first platform of the Republican party. The article was read to John C. Calhoun just before he died. "That man understands the thing; he has gone to the bottom of it; he will be heard from again," commented the dying man. So the same measures that incited the sister to write *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, which lifted her from obscurity to world-wide fame, aroused the brother to write this paper which advanced him from the position of a locally popular preacher to that of a recognized national leader. Unlike the Abolitionists, neither Henry Ward Beecher, nor indeed any of the Beechers, advocated immediate emancipation. Like Seward and Lincoln, they stood for limiting slavery to the states in which it existed. They believed that its inherent wastefulness would ultimately bring it to an end were it not reinvigorated by new privileges and new territory.

In 1854 Senator Stephen A. Douglas secured the repeal of the thirty-four-year-old Missouri Compromise, prohibiting the further extension of slavery, and in its place substituted his doctrine of squatter's sovereignty. This meant that the citizens of the states to be carved out of the territory seized from Mexico as a result of the Mexican War should determine for themselves by popular vote whether their territory should have slavery or freedom. The struggle between the slave power and the forces of freedom for the control of Kansas won for that state the name of "bleeding Kansas." Knowing that the sentiment of the legitimate settlers of

Kansas was predominantly anti-slavery the slave power sent armed adherents across the border from Missouri, known as "border ruffians." They seized the legislature and state offices, put in their own men and, under a régime of terrorism, carried the state for slavery.

The anti-slavery leaders of the North naturally undertook to reenforce with supplies and colonists the terrorized settlers. Henry Ward Beecher and Edward Everett Hale, the author of *The Man without a Country*, and the son-in-law of Beecher's elder sister, Mary, were two of the leaders in this ultimately successful effort to hold Kansas for freedom. When funds were raised to supply the Kansas colonists with Bibles, Beecher announced, to the horror of the pacifists, that "Sharpe's rifles were a greater moral agency than the Bible." And he pledged Plymouth Church to supply twenty-five of them for the colony being raised in New Haven. Without connivance on his part a large consignment of rifles was shipped into Kansas marked "Bibles." These were called "Beecher's Bibles" and thereafter all rifles supplied to the anti-slavery settlers were known as "Beecher's Bibles."

When in 1856 the Republican party was organized, with a platform that embodied his anti-slavery views and nominated John C. Fremont for President, Henry Ward Beecher secured a leave of absence from his church, except for the Sunday morning services. He wished to devote his time to the cause that was in his view Christ's cause. All through the campaign he spoke three days a week for as much as three hours at a time. So exhausting was the work that toward the close of the campaign he began to have seizures of dizziness. He would have to hold on to the nearest object to keep from falling. He came to believe that he would die from a stroke and at no distant date but was glad to sacrifice his life for the cause. Always thereafter when under unusual pressure he would have a recurrence of these seizures and felt that his death would be sudden and soon. Instead of dreading death, however, he wel-

comed the thought as a release to a better life. He did, in fact, die from a stroke, although not for thirty years. When at an evening meeting in Plymouth Church he expressed his resignation in the expectation of sudden death old Lyman Beecher called out, "I'm ashamed of you, Henry. I wish I could come back into the fight!"

Beecher was frequently and violently denounced for bringing politics into the pulpit. A letter in the *Hartford Times*, quoted from a Chicago paper, carried these head-lines:

"‘A Sermon by Henry Ward Beecher’ ‘Politics in the Pulpit.’ ‘The Church of St. John C. Fremont’ ‘Blasphemy of a Rev. Political Buffoon.’ During the sermon on October 5, 1856, he read St. Luke’s gospel about the man that fell among robbers. He said he was going to preach politics. He then said a certain man went from the East to Kansas and fell among border ruffians who stripped him of his raiment and wounded him, and departing, left him half dead. And likewise a Levite—and the Levites, my brethren were a very exclusive set of men, strong in opinions, similar to the Fillmore men of today—this Levite or Fillmore man passed on.

"‘But a certain Samaritan, and this, my brethren, means a Fremont man, had compassion on him, bound up his wounds, poured in oil and wine, sat him on his beast, took him to an Inn and cared for him.’

"Then the writer adds the following:

"Now, to anyone who has any respect at all for religion, the thought of a professed ‘servant of God’ turning what was built for a church into a Fremont ‘hut,’ thus converting the Bible into a Fremont electioneering pamphlet, and the minister himself becoming a lying, political buffoon—there comes a sorrow in the soul and a feeling that there can be really no such thing as religion at all."

In a letter to a well-wisher Beecher said of such attacks:

" . . . It ought to be taught in the family, in the school and in the pulpit that it is a fault, a sin, for any man to be unconcerned in political duties. When the

framing of laws, the election of magistrates, the discussion of public civil interests, and the sacred function of the vote, are regarded as degrading to a religious man, the Republic is already on the broad road to destruction."

When in February, 1860, Abraham Lincoln went to New York City to make the great speech in Cooper Union which led to his nomination for the presidency he stayed in the city a short time only and did but little else. Lincoln and Beecher then met for the first time and the following Sunday morning Lincoln took the ferry to Brooklyn and "followed the crowd" to Plymouth Church. He was shown into pew 89, five rows from the platform on which the preacher had brought liberty to "Pinky" and others of her race. Keen reader of men that he was, he undoubtedly then appraised what Beecher could do for the Union in the "irrepressible conflict" which he so clearly foresaw.

As soon as Lincoln was nominated Beecher campaigned for him just as he had for Fremont. After his election and after the outbreak of the war, Beecher, loyally supported by his church, consecrated his every resource to the winning of the war. He preached, he lectured, he wrote editorials. He had become the editor of *The Independent*. He told his wife to use for the cause his salary, by now an ample one, and all his income from his writings and lectures beyond their living necessities.

On his return home from a lecture tour, just after Fort Sumter was fired upon, his eldest son, Henry, asked him if he might enlist. "If you don't I'll disown you," he replied. He took charge of equipping the Fourteenth Long Island Regiment. His house, 124 Columbia Heights, became a storehouse for military goods and a place of consultation for those most concerned with the war. Beecher urged unceasingly a vigorous prosecution of the war. In one of his editorials he wrote: "Taxation and national honesty are now synonymous"

and concluded, "Every honest man in America ought to send to Washington one message in two words, *fight, tax.*"

Justly he attacked the dilatory tactics of General McClellan in the Peninsular Campaign and wrote: "Are we raising moss on cannon wheels, or are we fighting? Is it husbandry or war that is going on? Are we to starve Southern armies or conquer them? Do you mean to put down rebellion by soldiers or ferrets?" Of McClellan he said: "He is pro-slavery and that eats like a canker! With *that* leprosy upon a man, I do not believe in his patriotism, statesmanship, religion or good sense."

Unjustly he attacked President Lincoln on the same score and said of him: "The President seems to be a man without any sense of the value of time." Like most of the President's contemporary critics he had, and indeed could have, little conception of the all but insuperable difficulties with which he was faced. Beecher, rightly perceiving that slavery was the underlying cause of the war—in the sense that without slavery there would have been no war—demanded the emancipation of the slaves—so the war might openly and frankly be fought against slavery and for freedom. He wrote in August, 1862: "We have been made irresolute, indecisive and weak by the President's attempt to unite impossibilities; to make war and keep the peace; to strike hard and not hurt; to invade sovereign States and not meddle with their sovereignty; to put down rebellion without touching its cause. . . ." He little realized what President Lincoln knew so well, that such a course would fatally alienate from the Union the none too loyal border states. While Beecher unjustly attacked the President he was nevertheless powerfully instrumental in arousing public opinion to support the bolder course which he demanded and which personally the President wanted to follow.

One dark and stormy night in 1862, late in the evening, a very tall man muffled in a great cloak rang the bell of the Beechers' house. Mrs. Beecher opened the door. The tall

stranger asked to see Mr. Beecher on a matter of great urgency but declined to give his name. Mrs. Beecher was afraid to let him in. Her husband's life had often been threatened since the Kansas troubles. Leaving the caller in the rain she went up-stairs and told her husband. He insisted on seeing the stranger who was then shown to the study on the top floor. For hours Mrs. Beecher heard the two men in earnest conversation and finally she heard the familiar cadences of her husband's voice in prayer. After something like four hours Beecher himself let the man out. The next morning when his wife asked him who the stranger was he merely smiled. He did not tell her until after the assassination that the strange caller was President Lincoln.

This story has been affirmed and denied by an approximately equal number of reliable persons. Since it seems to be reasonably well established that at the time alleged the President was in New York conferring with some of his generals I am disposed to believe it. It seems to accord with both Lincoln's informality and his shrewd sense that he should have sought opportunity for an undisclosed talk with such a powerful molder of public opinion. And certainly Beecher's attitude toward the President and his policies grew from then on constantly more understanding until they came into complete agreement.

By the spring of 1863 Beecher's ceaseless war labors had so exhausted him that he was beginning to have again those seizures of dizziness. His friends and his church became anxious about him and finally persuaded him to go to Europe for a rest. In England he found the sentiment decidedly pro-southern. The sympathies of the nobility and the ruling classes, with few exceptions, were on the side of the Confederacy. And even those who wished the success of the North had little faith in its possibility. Beecher felt the underlying cause of this attitude was fear. "I do not mean fear of a narrow and technical kind," he said, "but the shadow that the

future of our nation already casts is so vast that they foresee they are falling into the second rank—that the will of the Republic is to be *the law of the world*. There is no disguising of this among Englishmen."

Beecher was invited to speak but declined and left shortly for the continent for a tour, intending to return via England but not to speak. On his way back he stopped in Brussels where he found the American Minister so dubious about the outcome of the war that he talked to him firmly about the inevitableness of ultimate victory for the Union. The Minister was so impressed that he was very urgent that Beecher should see King Leopold who was regarded as the wisest sovereign in Europe and whose advice Queen Victoria and other rulers frequently sought.

Yielding to the almost tearful pleadings of his courier, Beecher arrayed himself probably for the only time in his life in completely formal dress, including even a silk hat, and had an audience with the King. The frontier preacher and wearer of cast-off clothing of twenty years before was for this once as entirely conventional as dress could make him.

"After some conversation," as he related, "in which he [the King] plainly intimated to me that he would rejoice in bringing us to terms and peace again, all the while intimating that the South could not be overcome, and that it would be very wise for us to make a compromise, and that he would be entirely willing to render service in that direction, I said to him: 'Your Majesty'—I got it out once or twice right—if there were any ruling sovereign in Europe to whom more than to another we should be glad to refer this question it would be to the King of Belgium, a judge among nations and adviser among kings; but we do not propose to refer it to any one. We are going to fight it out ourselves; the strongest will win in our conflict and so it must be settled.

"Turning from that, he asked me what I thought of sending Maximilian to Mexico—for at that time he had



Henry Ward Beecher as he looked in his thirties when he left  
Indianapolis, Indiana.



Henry Ward Beecher during his Plymouth Church Ministry in Brooklyn  
(1847-1887).

not been sent to be the emperor of this new nation the Latins had established there; and, without suitable diplomacy, I said to him: ‘Your Majesty, any man that wants to sit upon a throne in Mexico I would advise to try Vesuvius first; if he can sit there for a while, then he might go and try it in Mexico.’

“This very soon brought our conversation to a close.”

Rather an extraordinary conversation for a tired American preacher representing only his church, to have with a ruling sovereign of Europe!

As soon as Beecher reached England again the English friends of the North urged him to make a series of speeches. At first he refused, but when they explained that they had been treated as the offscourings of the earth because of their northern sympathies, that if he turned the cold shoulder to them they would be overwhelmed, that Parliament was being urged to declare for recognition of the Confederacy; and, that the directors of the powerful southern propaganda were planning a series of meetings in the industrial centers to win over the non-voting but very influential workers, he finally consented. Arrangements were immediately made for him to make five speeches in the great industrial centers of Manchester, Glasgow, Edinburgh, Liverpool and London. These five speeches were actually one speech delivered in five parts. In the first at Manchester he gave the history of slavery in America and developed his theory that the war was merely a violent phase of the incessant and inevitable struggle between slavery and freedom. In the second, at Glasgow, he showed how slavery brought labor into contempt and reduced the free working man by its ruinous competition to miserable poverty. In the third at Edinburgh, he explained how the nation had been ruled by the South in behalf of slavery, and when the Lincoln administration came in and they found they could no longer rule, they rebelled. In the fourth at Liverpool, he pointed out “that this attempt to cover the fairest portion of the earth

with a slave population which buys nothing and a degraded white population that buys next to nothing, should array against it the sympathy of every true political economist and every thoughtful and farseeing manufacturer as tending to strike at the vital want of commerce—not the want of cotton, but the want of customers."

In his final speech in Exeter Hall, London, he summed up what he had said and emphasized that slavery was the only cause of the war, without slavery there would have been no war, that sympathy with the South was aiding in the building up of a slave empire and finally that the North was contending not only for its existence but for free labor and free institutions throughout the world.

The pro-southern propagandists prepared the way for Beecher by flooding the papers with all the lies they would print and what they would not print they set forth on blood-red posters with which each successive city was placarded. In Manchester such a poster read: "Men of Manchester, Englishmen! What reception can you give this wretch, save unmitigated disgust and contempt? His impudence in coming here is only equaled by his cruelty and impiety. . . ." Other posters, referring to the Trent affair, charged him with demanding that "the best blood of England must flow for the outrage England had perpetrated on America." Here in Manchester they proclaimed that he had demanded that London be sacked and called upon all Englishmen to see that he gets "the welcome he deserves."

About one-quarter of the great hall, packed to the point of suffocation, was filled with roughs who had been sent to break up the meeting. For an hour they were successful. Their shouts, groans, stamping and cat-calls made it impossible for even Beecher's powerful voice to be heard. Finally he so won over the neutral portion of the audience that they coerced the disturbers to give him a chance to be heard. For an hour he

spoke without interruption. "If one can imagine a ship-master," he commented, "giving orders to a mutinous crew in the midst of a tropical thunder-storm, he will have some faint idea of the task that was on my hands."

When he finished the applause was terrific and hundreds rushed forward to shake his hand. A man in the balcony, wanting to do likewise, but realizing it was impossible, leaned over the railing and, thrusting out an umbrella, called out, "Shake my umbrella!" When Beecher had done so the man shouted, "By Jock! nobody shan't touch that umbrella again!" The speech was carried in full by all the newspapers.

In the Glasgow speech he said: "When I am asked, Why not let the South go? I return for an answer a question. Be pleased to tell me what part of the British Islands you are willing to let go from under the crown when its inhabitants secede and set up for independence?"

At the meeting in Edinburgh the crowd was so dense when Beecher arrived that he had to be handed along over people's heads, hoisted into the gallery, and then lowered down over the front of the gallery onto the platform.

I have spoken of his prophetic glimpses into the future. He closed this speech with these words: "The day is coming when the foundations of the earth will be lifted out of their places; and there are two nations that ought to be found shoulder to shoulder and hand in hand for the sake of Christianity and universal liberty, and these nations are Great Britain and America."

At Liverpool the pro-slavery forces made a last despairing stand against him. Here he received through the mails more than the usual number of threats against his life. He fully expected that he would either be shot or have a stroke of apoplexy. As a matter of fact, groups of heavily armed disturbers sat in the galleries at this meeting and might have used their guns had not a large force of Beecher defenders come

also armed and announced, "The first man that fires will rue it." Beecher tried for an hour and a half before he could make himself heard over the pandemonium.

When he was being catapulted through a back door by the police into Exeter Hall in London a woman threw her arms around his neck and so got herself dragged in with him. She turned out to be a former member of Plymouth Church who had married an Englishman and was living in London. "I suppose that is the way a great many sinners get into heaven finally," commented Beecher.

The London meeting was comparatively orderly. The fight already had been won. The non-voting common people, including the destitute spinners who had been thrown out of employment by the lack of southern cotton, had been confirmed in their instinctive feeling that the cause of the North was their cause. The pro-southern effort to proselytize them was abandoned. The movement to get Parliament to declare for recognition of the Confederacy was dropped. Grant's victory at Vicksburg and Lee's defeat at Gettysburg made Beecher's efforts more effective than otherwise they could have been. Beecher's speeches became the talk of the London clubs, a sure sign of fame in the British Isles.

On his return home in November he was given a huge ovation by his fellow-townsmen. In describing some of his difficulties he said that to get over fine shades of meaning to those vast turbulent British audiences was like "driving a team of run-away horses and making love to a lady at the same time."

In an article in the *Atlantic Monthly* of the following January entitled, "The Minister Plenipotentiary," Oliver Wendell Holmes described Beecher's British mission as "a more remarkable embassy than any envoy who has represented us in Europe since Franklin pleaded the cause of the young Republic at the Court of Versailles." "Mr. Beecher's five orations in England take deserved place among the great forensic triumphs of the world," said Dr. Lyman Abbott in his *Henry Ward Beecher*.

“. . . by the side of the orations of Demosthenes against the Crown and Cicero’s orations against Catiline.” “And then,” wrote Emanuel Hertz in his *Abraham Lincoln: A New Portrait*, “after reading those speeches, five of them which Beecher delivered in England, he [Lincoln] said to his Cabinet toward the end that if the war was ever fought to a successful issue there would be but one man—Beecher—to raise the flag at Fort Sumter, for without Beecher in England there might have been no flag to raise.”

Twenty-five years ago I met Justice Roger A. Pryor of the Supreme Court of New York State, who had been in his youth on the staff of General Robert E. Lee. He told me that it had been the opinion of General Lee and the members of his staff that had it not been for *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* and Henry Ward Beecher’s speeches in the British Isles the Confederacy could have secured the recognition of Great Britain and France with all that that would have meant to them in both moral and material aid.

## CHAPTER XIX

### HENRY WARD BEECHER

#### STATESMAN AND CITIZEN

**HENRY WARD BEECHER** went to England a popular preacher, editor and lecturer out of favor with the Administration in Washington because of his unsparing criticism of its conduct of the war. He returned a famous man and a savior of his country in her most imperiled hour. His strained relations with the Administration were forgotten and he came into close association with both Secretary of War Stanton and President Lincoln. When in 1864 President Lincoln sent a delegation to confer with Alexander H. Stephens, the Vice-President of the Confederacy, Beecher like many others became alarmed lest, in his naturally intense desire to end the war, the President should make concessions to the South. Accordingly, Beecher went to Washington to see him.

"We were alone in his receiving room," he wrote of the interview. "His hair was 'every way for Sunday.' It looked as though it was an abandoned stubble-field. He had on slippers and his vest was what was called 'going free.' He looked wearied and when he sat down in a chair looked as though every limb wanted to drop off his body. And I said to him: 'Mr. Lincoln, I come to you to know whether the public interest will permit you to explain to me what this Southern commission means.' Well, he listened very patiently and looked up to the ceiling for a few moments and said: 'Well, I am almost of a mind to show you all the documents.'

"'Well, Mr. Lincoln, I should like to see them if it is proper.' He went to his little secretary and came and handed me a little card as long as my finger and an inch wide and on that was written:—

" 'You will pass the bearer through the lines' (or something to that effect).

" 'There,' he said, 'is all there is of it. Now Blair thinks something can be done, but I don't, but I have no objection to have him try his hand. He has no authority whatever but to go and see what he can do.'

" 'Well,' said I, 'you have lifted a great burden off my mind.' "

During the closing weeks of the war, Secretary Stanton wired Beecher after every important development. On Sunday morning, April 2, 1865, in Plymouth Church, just after the sermon, a telegram from Secretary Stanton was handed to Beecher in the pulpit announcing decisive Union victories after three days of hard fighting. After reading it aloud Beecher asked the thousands present to turn to *America*. The great company, realizing that the war was practically over, sang the noble anthem with streaming eyes.

Shortly after the surrender of Charleston in 1865 it was decided to celebrate the anniversary of the fall of Fort Sumter by a great military and naval demonstration. The President, mindful of his intention formed many months before, issued a military order through Secretary Stanton that Brevet Major-General Anderson should raise over the ruins of the fort the same flag which he had lowered when he had evacuated Sumter on April 14, 1861. This order also announced as part of the ceremonies an address by Henry Ward Beecher.

On April eighth the official party sailed from New York for Charleston on the steamer *Arago* with a distinguished company, among whom were General Anderson, Generals Dix and Doubleday, William Lloyd Garrison and Henry Ward Beecher. When they arrived they learned that General Lee had surrendered to General Grant.

In concluding his Fort Sumter address Beecher spoke these words which forecast his future policy, if not, unhappily, the policy which ~~was~~ to be followed:

"But for the people misled, for the multitudes drafted and driven into this civil war, let not a trace of animosity remain. The moment their willing hand drops the musket and they return to their allegiance, then stretch out your own honest right hand to greet them. Recall to them the old days of kindness. Our hearts wait for their redemption. All the resources of a renovated nation shall be applied to their redemption. All the resources of a renovated nation shall be applied to rebuild their prosperity and smooth down the furrows of war."

At this time Henry Ward's youngest brother, Colonel James Beecher, was in command of the upper half of the city of Charleston, his troops occupying the citadel, and it would seem reasonable to assume that the brothers met, although there appears to be no record of such a meeting.

Before the official party had left for the North, word came of Lincoln's assassination. In his sermon on the tragedy, preached on his return, Beecher said of this moment: "Did ever so many hearts in so brief a time, touch such boundless feelings? It was the uttermost of joy: it was the uttermost of sorrow—noon and midnight without a space between."

As soon as the war was over the Republican party began to divide on the question of the readmission to the Union of the Southern States. The conservatives wished to readmit them as rapidly as possible and as soon as they were prepared to swear allegiance to the Federal Government, forever to renounce slavery and the right of secession, and to give the former slaves civil rights. This was the position of President Lincoln with whom Beecher had discussed the subject, presumably before going to Sumter to make his speech where for the first and only time in his life he was in effect the official spokesman of the President and his Administration. The radicals, on the other hand, demanded that the Southern States be, as it were, placed on probation until, after acknowledging their mistakes and confessing their iniquities, they were thor-

oughly chastened. In the meantime, they were to be policed and governed by the United States Army.

President Johnson's policy was essentially that of Lincoln, Beecher and the conservative Republicans until, maddened by the insults of the radical Republicans and influenced by the flattery of adroit southern politicians, he gradually became himself extreme and intemperate. Beecher said in a letter to President Johnson shortly after his accession to the Presidency:

"The two points that have lain most at my heart are:

"1. That the government should not allow itself, by any temptation to invade the *true* State rights. . . .

"2. The other point is the necessity of securing for freedmen the kindness and good-will of Southern white men. Their fate will largely depend upon their neighbor's dispositions toward them. Northern people nor the government can hold them up long if all the State populations around them are inimical.

"In both these respects, as in others, I perceive that your sentiments are enlightened and statesmanlike."

In September, 1866, a National Convention of Soldiers and Sailors was held in Cleveland, Ohio, to give expression to the conservative Republican policy for the readmission of the Southern States. The Convention invited Henry Ward Beecher to serve as their chaplain. This he could not do because it came in the midst of his hay-fever season but he wrote them a letter setting forth his views which they published. In this letter he reiterated and elaborated what he had written to President Johnson, what he had said in his own pulpit and in speeches in most of the eastern cities.

"Refusal to admit loyal senators and representatives from the South will not help the freedmen," he said in conclusion. "It will not secure for them the vote. It will not protect them. . . .

"Once united we can by schools, a free press and increasing free speech, attack every evil and secure every good. Meanwhile, the great chasm which rebellion has made is not filled up. It grows deeper and stretches wider! Out of it rise dread spectres and threatening sounds. Let that gulf be closed and bury in it slavery, sectional animosity and all strifes and hatreds!"

This letter created a sensation and evoked an avalanche of vituperative abuse, not only from his political foes but from his friends, members of his church, his fellow-clergy and even members of his family. He was accused of having deserted the Republican party, of having become a "Johnson man," of having made an irreparable mistake which would forever destroy his influence. His one-time friend, protégé and assistant, Theodore Tilton, who had recently succeeded him in the editorship of *The Independent*, exceeded all others in the bitterness of his attacks.

"The rage and abuse of excited men I have too long been used to, now to be surprised or daunted," Beecher wrote a friend. ". . . I stood almost alone, my church . . . full of excitement; all my ministerial brethren, with a few honorable exceptions, either aloof or in clamor against me; well nigh the whole religious press denouncing me and the political press furious."

Although he had said only what he had repeatedly said before he had said it under different circumstances. The friction between President Johnson and the Congress, now completely dominated by the radical Republicans, had become the knock-down, drag-out fight which culminated in the impeachment trial of the President. Amid the inflamed suspicions and hatreds of these national animosities Beecher's letter was interpreted.

Not long after this Johnson made his notorious "swing around the circle" in which his gross and angry attacks upon

his enemies disgusted all temperate men. Beecher, deciding that the President's vituperative violence had made him the worst enemy of his own fundamentally right policies, withdrew his endorsement not of the Johnson policies but of Johnson. The Johnson men then accused Beecher of having changed his attitude for fear of losing his job as the best paid preacher in America. So by endorsing Johnson's reconstruction policies Beecher alienated most of his Republican friends and by finally repudiating Johnson he alienated their opponents. Like most men who steer a middle course in hotly controversial matters he drew upon himself the fire of both sides.

During the most acrimonious period of reconstruction General Robert E. Lee took the presidency of Washington University in Lexington, Virginia. The radical Republicans started a hue and cry about the danger of entrusting to the military leader of a rebellion the training of American citizens. Henry Ward Beecher publicly announced his confidence in General Lee's fitness for such a position and later proved the sincerity of his endorsement by contributing one thousand dollars to the nearly destitute little college.<sup>1</sup>

As if to miss no opportunity to offend the prejudices and increase the antagonism of conservative people Beecher proclaimed in May, 1867, before a Woman's Rights' Convention in New York City, his views on woman's suffrage—those views which had gradually matured ever since the Yankee woman in Lawrenceburg had secured him his first opportunity as a preacher.

" . . . I feel it to be woman's duty to act in public affairs. . . . I do not stand here to plead for your rights. Rights compared with duties are insignificant—are mere baubles—are as the bow on your bonnet. . . .

"What I am arguing, when I argue that woman should vote, is that she should do all things back of that which

<sup>1</sup>This was told me by President Francis P. Gaines, of Washington and Lee University—General Lee's present-day successor.

the vote means and enforces. She should be a nursing mother to human society. . . .”

A few months earlier he had been invited to speak at a similar convention in Albany but had declined for these reasons given in a letter<sup>2</sup> to Mrs. Elizabeth Cady Stanton:

“I should certainly come to Albany and contribute my share of influence if I were not tied hand and foot. I am to preside and speak on Monday night at my own church. On Thursday night I preside and introduce a lecturer at the Acad. of Music in Brooklyn. On Friday at Cooper Institute I have a speech to make for the starving people of the South and on Saturday, at the same place, a speech for the Cretans—But these are *punctuations* of my main business which just now is to write a novel for Bonner (the proprietor of The New York Ledger) at which I am working every forenoon. I have also a matter of two sermons every week to prepare. It is not possible, then, for me to get out of town. I write these details because our friend Studwell intimated to me that you felt that I did not care to be identified with the movement in such a way as to take the unpopularity of the women chiefly engaged in it. I should be unwilling to have you think so. It is true that I do not work in your organization and so identify myself with you as to take praise or blame for the whole movement. But that is not special to you, but a part of my life-long method of labor. I have never belonged to any anti-slavery society, Christian or heathen; I am willing to take my stand with anybody on great issues or objects but in regard to the organization and instruments by which to attain the ends, I have always let others work their way & I mine. I think there is a touch of wildness in my blood (some of my ancestors must have nursed an Indian breast) there is impatience of the harness and so I have always worked on my own hook. . . .”

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<sup>2</sup>Now in the possession of the Henry E. Huntington Library.

The novel to which he referred was *Norwood*—his only attempt at fiction. Norwood, Ohio, a town now almost completely surrounded by Cincinnati, was named after that novel. As a collection of pictures of life in early New England it had interest and value, but as a novel it was a failure. When *Uncle Tom's Cabin* appeared, Beecher was so well known and his sister so obscure, that he was accused of having written it. Later he declared that he wrote *Norwood* to prove that he could not have written *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

When Henry Ward Beecher came to Brooklyn he took up in his leisure time the study of art. "It is one of the compensations given to us who must live in the city," he wrote a friend, "that there are galleries of paintings every year newly opened and that music is offered such as you cannot find elsewhere." He gradually built up an art library. As it became financially possible, at first in a very small way, he became a collector of precious stones, of books, engravings, paintings and rugs. Eventually he became expert in both horticulture and arboriculture, Turkish and Persian rugs, art books, soaps, horses and precious stones. He carried an assortment of unset stones in his pocket which he would take out in leisure moments, spread out and contemplate with absorbed delight. This was his favorite way of relaxing overwrought nerves. On Saturdays he would visit Tiffany's and be shown the finest specimens of their recently acquired jewels.

Early in each year he would lay out for himself a course of reading for the year. Lyman Abbott in his sketch of him in *Silhouettes of My Contemporaries* gave as an example of such a course: ". . . for fiction, George Eliot; for poetry, Tennyson; for history, Green; for essays, Milton; for drama, the Greek tragedies in translation—and then [he would] read as the mood invited him." And when he went on lecture tours he would put into a battered old bag (of which Doctor Abbott said, "I suppose it must once have been new") sample

volumes of these various classifications which he would pull out and read as his fancy dictated.

His absorption in books never eclipsed his still greater absorption in men. He drew out in conversation the views of stage-drivers, ferrymen, longshoremen, carpenters and common laborers, just as he did fellow-preachers, business men, professional men and scholars. "Every man knows more about some subjects than I do," he commented. In this he was like Walt Whitman whom it is said he influenced.

He was a hard but not a methodical worker. "I seldom succeed when I try. The best things are unexpected in so far as my work is concerned," he said in a letter to a friend. The way he usually prepared his sermons in his later life was typical.

"I always have floating in my head half-formed thoughts I would like to utter. Saturday is my day of rest. I am apt to spend it on my farm at Peekskill under the trees. I sleep soundly Saturday night; I sleep vicariously for my congregation. After breakfast I go into my study, feel of my different themes, the one that is ripe I pluck, select my text, organize my thought, and go into the pulpit with my theme fresh, my mind and heart full of it."

When Doctor Abbott once asked him to write an article on health he replied, "There are but three rules. Eat well, sleep well and laugh well." Although apparently impulsive and spontaneous, in reality he carefully planned his conduct from the most trifling to the most important matters—he regarded his body as a machine to be so run as to obtain from it a maximum of efficiency. He ate sparingly and only such things as he knew agreed with him, he took a nap after his midday meal, he did no studying at night, and after evening preaching or lecturing he avoided conversation.

Much of his health-giving laughter was with his own and other people's children. Ed Damon, a friend of his boys, wrote me that when he was visiting "Will" and "Bert" their father would sometimes creep up-stairs to their room in the morning and throw part of a tumbler of water in their faces as they slept. Then he would flee down the stairs laughing as he ran. One morning the boys lay in ambush and, with water from a syringe, squirted him as he crept up the stairs. Despite this discomfiture, while making his escape, he laughed more heartily than ever.

He was constantly having stories wrongly attached to him. The most persistent was to the effect that once he opened his Sunday morning sermon with the exclamation: "It's damned hot to-day—I heard a man say whom I passed on the street." When Dr. J. M. Hubbert once asked him if it were true, "Oh, no," he replied, "that yarn went the rounds, but there's not a word of truth in it. . . . I got so many letters about it, some expressing painful regret that I should have done such a thing, that I gave it public denial in one of my 'Star papers' published in the Independent. After that a man from a distance came to me and said he wanted the denial from my own lips, because he had once referred to my printed denial when a lady spoke up and said she was present and heard me repeat the oath from my pulpit. I then said to this man: 'Tell that woman she lied; that she knows she lied; that I know she lied; and that now she knows that I know she lied.' " Apparently none of the Beechers ever practised "turning the other cheek also," at least in repartee.

One evening after supper, at the house of Rossiter W. Raymond, Beecher was telling stories to the children. At length the youngest had to go to bed. "Climbing reluctantly up the stairs," said Raymond, "the child turned and shouted down into the parlor, 'O, Mr. Beecher, please don't say anything after I'm gone!' 'Not a word,' was the reply; and Mr. Beecher immediately arose and (after the usual hunt for his hat)

bade us all good night, and went out, slamming the front door so that his little friend might know he had kept his promise."

When I was a very small boy, in fact too small to remember it, Henry Ward Beecher came to visit my parents. My mother showed me to him dressed up for the occasion and remarked that some one had said I looked like him. "Oh, don't worry about that, Susie," he protested, "he'll outgrow it!"

The more his public duties multiplied the more incessant became the private encroachments upon his time. Once he described a typical day:

"It is six o'clock in the morning. The day is begun. The family are emerging. Breakfast will be ready in half an hour. You look for *The Tribune*. The bell rings. A man has called thus early for fear you might be out. You dispatch his business. Sitting down to breakfast the bell rings and the servant says the man will wait. But what pleasure can one have at a meal with a man upstairs waiting for him. . . . You run up. Can you marry a couple at so-and-so? That is settled. Prayers are had with the family. The bell rings once, twice, three times. When you rise there are five persons waiting for you in the front parlor. A young man from the country wishes your name on his circular for a school. A young woman in failing health by confinement to sewing does not know what to do; behind in rent; cannot get away to the country; does not wish charity, only wishes someone to enable her to break away from a state of things that will in six months kill her. Another calls to inquire after a friend of whom he has lost sight. While you are attending to these the bell is active and other persons take the place of those who go. . . . A kind woman calls in behalf of a boarder who is out of place, desponding, will throw himself away if he cannot get some means of livelihood. Another calls to know if I will not visit a poor family in great distress in — Street. A good and honest-looking man comes next; is out of work, has 'heard that your riverince is a kind man etc.' Another man wants to get his family out from Ireland; can pay half, if someone will

intercede with ship-owners to trust him the balance. A stranger has died and a sexton desires a clergyman's services. Several persons desire religious conversation. It is after ten o'clock. A moment's lull. You catch your hat and run out. Perhaps you have forgotten some appointment. You betake yourself to your study, not a little flurried by the contrariety of things which you have been considering. You return to dine. There are five or six persons waiting for you. At tea you find others also with their divers necessities.

"This is not overdrawn and for many months of the year it is far underdrawn. There is no taxation compared to incessant various conversation with people for whom you must think, devise and for whose help you feel yourself often utterly incompetent."

Beecher could not have withstood these combined public and private burdens had it not been for his sense of humor and his escapes to the country—for a six-week summer vacation and for a day or two at a time between vacations. He spent these vacations in Salisbury, Connecticut, then in Lenox, Massachusetts. Here he bought a place which he described as a good farm "to lie down upon," but it proved too far from the city so he sold it in a few years and rented one at Matteawan. And during his hay-fever season he always went to the White Mountains. Finally he bought his permanent place at Peekskill on the Hudson. After living some years in the farmhouse on the property he built a large mansion where he could keep open house for children, grandchildren and friends. "A house is the shape which a man's thoughts take when he imagines how he should like to live," he had said in his *Star Paper*, "Building a House." "Its interior is the measure of his social and domestic nature; its exterior, of his esthetic and artistic nature. It interprets in material forms his ideas of home, of friendship and of comfort."

"I am as determined to have flowers as my farmer, Mr. Turner, is to have vegetables," he said of life at "Boscobel," his

Peekskill farm, "and there is a friendly quarrel in hand all the season, a kind of border warfare, between flowers and vegetables—"

During these years Beecher's ever alert enemies accused him of prosperity. They said sneeringly that it was a far cry from the meek and lowly Jesus, who had no place to lay His head, to his professed follower, Henry Ward Beecher, with his town house and his country estate, his collections, his fast horses, precious stones and other luxuries. One of his biographers, John Henry Barrows, estimated that he earned during his forty years in Brooklyn a million and a half dollars, what with his lectures, his writings<sup>8</sup> and his mounting salary. Beecher repudiated the supposed connection between poverty and sanctity as an unfounded claim of the Medieval church. In his lecture on "Moral Uses of Luxury and Beauty" he asserted: "I don't know why he [any man] should not indulge himself and his family with the elements of the beautiful. I see no reason why a man should dress plainly when he is able to dress richly provided he cheats nobody."

Although he was a literal follower of Jesus he was by no means a follower of a literal Jesus. He pointed out that an exact application of the Sermon on the Mount would be utterly subversive of society; that Jesus, who usually spoke figuratively, was always being interpreted literally. Just as the laws of Nature were the laws of God, so was beauty a part of religion. These pantheistic tendencies were disquieting to some of his friends, while his enemies eagerly sought to twist them into a demonstration that he was a pagan.

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<sup>8</sup> See Bibliography, pp. 411 and 412.

## CHAPTER XX

### HENRY WARD BEECHER

#### ACCUSATION

IN 1860 Henry C. Bowen, the treasurer of Plymouth Church and one of its founders, acquired control of the well-known weekly, *The Independent*. The next year he induced Henry Ward Beecher to take the editorship and at Beecher's request made a bright young man named Theodore Tilton his assistant, to relieve him of all details. For some time Beecher had been contributing his *Star Papers* and the magazine had also been publishing his sermons and lecture-room talks. Bowen had been active thirteen years before in raising the fund with which Beecher had been enabled to move his family from Indianapolis to Brooklyn. Beecher had been deeply grateful and the two men had been close friends ever since.

Within a year Beecher submitted his resignation as editor because of the disreputable character of certain patent-medicine and other advertisements which the paper was printing. Bowen wrote him a penitent letter in which he pleaded ignorance of the nature of the offensive matter. Beecher finally agreed to remain, provided he should have entire control of what went into the paper including advertisements. Bowen undoubtedly resented this and regarded it as high-handed conduct on the part of his one-time protégé. Figuring, however, that it would cost more to lose Beecher as editor than to scrap questionable advertisements, he gave way, but the old friendship between the two men was gone.

Rumors against Beecher's moral character began to be whispered. They did not reach Beecher's ears for a long time but they distressed some of his friends. It was generally be-

lieved that these rumors originated with Bowen although later he denied under oath having any inculpatory evidence upon which to base them.

Beecher first knew Theodore Tilton as a clever and attractive young man who reported his sermons. Even before the latter became his editorial assistant Beecher had become fond of him and interested in his future. Tilton eagerly absorbed the elder man's views on religion, politics, art, and life in all its phases. Beecher found the young man's mind brilliant—his character unformed and unstable. He came to treat him almost as a son. Pleased with Tilton's work, Bowen and Beecher agreed that he should be acting editor while Beecher was abroad in 1863. On his return from England Beecher was loath, because of the pressure of his heavy public obligations, to resume any editorial duties other than writing so he proposed that Tilton should continue to edit the paper which should retain Beecher's name as nominal editor for a year—and after that Tilton should succeed him. This program was carried out with disastrous results to the younger man's already excessive vanity. He speedily came to believe himself a greater man than his chief and to treat him with patronizing condescension. Tilton, at thirty, succeeded to the editorship. Widely acclaimed as the youngest and cleverest editor in the country, he went on the lecture platform where, with his Byronic posing and superficial brilliance, he made an instant success.

He married a little Sunday-School teacher of Plymouth Church whom Beecher had known from her childhood. She was a particularly devout young woman and had, as her pastor believed, a deeply religious nature. Not content with teaching a Sunday-School class, she worked zealously among the poor in one of the missions associated with Plymouth Church. Her conversations with her minister were largely about her mission work. She was not of the socially élite of Brooklyn but such distinctions, naturally, meant nothing to

Henry Ward Beecher. Tilton also was of obscure origin. Beecher took a paternal interest in the young couple's romance and early married life. At the husband's ardent solicitation he visited them as often as was possible in his crowded life.

After the war Tilton became one of the most ardent of the radical Republicans who clamored for vengeance against the fallen South. When Beecher's letter to the Soldiers' and Sailors' Convention was published in 1866, advocating immediate readmission to the Union of the Southern States, Tilton pounced upon it with avidity. Here was an opportunity to defend his political opinions, prove his complete freedom from the leading strings of his former chief, and at the same time please his employer, Bowen, who was also a radical anti-southern Republican. Tilton's attacks became so bitter and so personal that Beecher wished to sever all connection with the paper. By ceasing to publish his sermons, Bowen broke the contract with Beecher and Beecher withdrew.

Three years after leaving *The Independent* Beecher became the editor and part owner of *The Christian Union*. Tilton, left to his own devices, became more and more radical and erratic in his views. Finally he came under the spell of the fascinating Claflin sisters, Victoria Woodhull and Tennessee Claflin<sup>1</sup>—self-appointed leaders of the radical woman's party—proponents both in theory and practise of free love. Tilton himself not only advocated free love but practised it with promiscuous vigor, particularly when away on lecture tours. He finally wrote an editorial which, in effect, committed the paper to free-love views, a novel stand for a religious publication! The conservative Congregational subscribers were naturally incensed and clamorously complained. What with this situation, the loss of the prestige of Beecher's name, and the competition of the immediately successful *Christian Union*, the

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<sup>1</sup>These beautiful and notorious women, leaders in spiritualism and free love, became, with the backing of Commodore Vanderbilt, the first "lady-brokers" of Wall Street.

paper began to lose ground rapidly. Bowen became alarmed for his property. He went to Tilton and charged him with injuring the paper by his dangerous views and personal immoralities. Tilton countered by accusing Beecher of having made improper proposals to Mrs. Tilton. The two men put their heads together over this and in December, 1870, Tilton wrote Beecher a letter in which he demanded that he resign his church and leave town "for reasons which you explicitly know. . . ." This note Bowen delivered to Beecher in person. In lending himself to this attack upon his former friend Bowen may have reasoned that, if successful, it would rid him of a dangerous rival, and, if unsuccessful, would give him an excellent excuse to get rid of Tilton who had become such a doubtful asset.

When Beecher read this threat he exclaimed, "This is sheer insanity; this man is crazy," and showed the letter to Bowen who professed to be ignorant of its contents. Bowen then told Beecher of complaints he had received about Tilton's opinions and immoralities, and asked Beecher's opinion as to whether he should retain him on *The Independent* and the *Brooklyn Union* which Bowen also owned. Beecher said frankly that, under the circumstances, he felt Tilton's connection with either paper would be fatal to its interests. Bowen reported this conversation to Tilton and dismissed him from both papers.

Before this Mrs. Tilton had sent word to Beecher as her pastor that she had left her home and gone to her mother's, and needed his advice. When Beecher called, she told him of her husband's cruelty and unfaithfulness and her unhappiness, and asked him whether he thought her justified in seeking a separation. She did not state or intimate, and probably did not then know, her husband's charge against Beecher. He told her he would send Mrs. Beecher to see her, who would be more competent to advise her in such a matter. Mrs. Beecher did see her, and was so horrified by what she heard that she reported back to her husband that she would not live

another hour with a man who had treated her with one-hundredth part of such indignities and cruelties. With her husband's approval Mrs. Beecher advised separation.

Francis D. Moulton, Theodore Tilton's most intimate friend whose wife was a member of Plymouth Church, now came to Beecher in Tilton's behalf. Moulton was a junior partner in a large importing and exporting house which won special tariff and other favors from the government during this, the most shameless, period of the "pork barrel." This required "dirty work" which Moulton, as the contact man, handled. As soon as Tilton became the editor of probably the most powerful Republican weekly, his classmate, Moulton, assiduously renewed their college friendship. The shrewd political manipulator well knew how to use the young editor's incredible vanity to further his own purposes. Also it did not take Moulton long to size up Beecher and to decide that he could best be "worked" through appeals to his tender heart and generous sympathies. His first objective was, through Beecher's powerful influence, to get Tilton reinstated in his editorial positions. By the time the impossibility of that had become apparent Moulton was too deeply involved in the intrigue to pull out. He was an attractive, plausible and, apparently, open and aboveboard young man as, indeed, he had to be for his delicate type of work.

After winning Beecher's confidence Moulton appealed to his sympathies for Tilton whom Moulton represented as ruined through Beecher both in his home and in his career. Beecher, Moulton asserted, had blighted the Tiltons' home by his failure to perceive and guard against Mrs. Tilton's undue affection for him and then he had wrecked Tilton's career by advising his discharge from his editorial positions. He then characterized the charges against Tilton's character as malicious slanders which Bowen would have overlooked had not Beecher believed them. Beecher accepted these statements at their face value and was filled with horror and acute remorse that—even

though innocently—he could thus have wrecked the lives of two people of whom he had been so fond. Moulton then persuaded him that he alone, as a mutual friend, was in a position to repair the damage. If Beecher would trust him implicitly everything could be adjusted. Beecher agreed to do whatever Moulton advised consistent with honor.

Shortly after this Tilton met Beecher at Moulton's house and showed him a letter written by Mrs. Tilton, accusing him of having made to her improper proposals. Mrs. Tilton had been forced to return to her husband's home because he had seized, and carried home, their sick child. Beecher gasped, "This is all a dream . . ." and expressed doubt that Mrs. Tilton had really written it. Tilton retorted, "It is but a few squares to my house, go and ask Mrs. Tilton for yourself whether or not she wrote the letter. . . ." Beecher went to the Tilton house and was shown up to Mrs. Tilton's room where she was ill in bed. This scene ensued as given by Beecher himself during the subsequent legal trial in his "uncontradicted testimony":

"She was as one dead and yet she was living. I sat down by her side and said to her: 'Elizabeth, I have just seen your husband and had a long interview with him. He has been making many statements to me and charges and he has sent me to you in respect to some of them, that you should verify them.' I then said: 'He has charged me with alienating your affections from him. He has charged me that I have corrupted your simplicity and your truthfulness. He has also charged me with attempting improprieties. . . .' It is a hard thing (shedding tears) for a man to speak to a woman whom he reveres about such things and I could not express myself very clearly. 'Are these things so, Elizabeth?' She—there was the faintest quiver and tears trickled down her cheek but no answer. I said to her: 'He says that you have charged me, Elizabeth, with making improper advances. Have you stated all these things and made these charges?'

And she opened her eyes and said, 'My friend, I could not help it!' 'Could not help it, Elizabeth! Why could you not help it? You know that these things are not true.' 'Oh, Mr. Beecher,' said she, 'I was wearied out. I have been—I have been wearied with his importunities,' or something to that effect. 'He made me think that if I would confess love to you it would help him to confess to me his alien affections,' or words to that effect. 'But,' I said to her, 'Elizabeth, this a charge of attempting improper things. You know that that is not true.' 'Yes, it is not true,' she said, 'but what can I do?' 'Do! You can take it back again.' She hesitated and I did not understand her hesitation. 'Why can you not take it back? It is not true.' She said something about she would be willing to do it if it could be done without injury to her husband which I did not understand. 'But,' said I, 'you ought to give me a written retraction of that written charge.' She said she was willing to do anything if I would not use it against her husband. I said, 'Give me paper.' She pointed to the secretary in the other room . . . I went there, I knew it and took from the secretary some note-paper, pen and ink. I brought them to the bedside. She raised herself up a little and wrote the first part of the retraction. She signed it."

"The witness (reading):

"Wearied with importunity and weakened by sickness I gave a letter inculpating my friend Henry Ward Beecher under assurances that that would remove all difficulties between me and my husband. That letter I now revoke. I was persuaded to it—almost forced—when I was in a weakened state of mind. I regret it and recall all its statements.

"E. R. TILTON."

"After reading it over to herself she added on her own motion: 'I desire to say explicitly, Mr. Beecher has never offered any improper solicitation but has always treated me in a manner becoming a Christian and a gentleman.'

". . . and this she signed with her full name,

"Elizabeth R. Tilton.

"Q.—Did you in any way suggest or request that additional writing? A.—I did not; it was of her own mind.

"Q.—Did you in any manner dictate or indicate any form of expression or substance in that? A.—I did not."

All this is taken from the "uncontradicted testimony" in the subsequent legal trial.

About the same time Tilton, dramatically lifting his hand over his head, assured a friend, "My wife is as pure as an angel in Heaven. . . ." This also is quoted from the "uncontradicted testimony."

Mrs. Tilton retracted her retraction and then reasserted it with the result that she so invalidated the credibility of her testimony that she was not called as a witness on either side.

In a conversation of many hours in Beecher's study a few days later Moulton further adroitly played upon Beecher's sympathy for the Tiltons. When Beecher was in a state of intense excitement, depression and contrition, Moulton persuaded him that if he would give him in writing the substance of what he had just said about his penitence, he felt sure it would lead Tilton to forgive him. Beecher, now fully trusting Moulton as a wise, kind and disinterested friend, tried to comply but was too excited to express himself coherently in writing. Whereupon Moulton said, "Let me write it," to which Beecher agreed. Beecher then talked fast and vehemently in condemnation of himself for his alleged unconscious wrong-doing in not protecting Mrs. Tilton against her unwise affections and then causing her husband's business ruin by giving credence to slanders against him. While Beecher was still talking and Moulton taking notes, the supper bell rang. Unless Beecher went promptly to his supper he would be late to his evening service. To this open-hearted ingenuous man his work was all important and he had not the faintest suspicion of the fateful character of the transaction in which he was playing

so guileless a part. Moulton urged him to sign the memorandum, to which he objected that he could not sign a memorandum he had not written, at least without reading it over, which he had no time to do. Moulton pleaded that it could not have the desired effect with Tilton unless he could point to Beecher's signature as authorizing it. Thereupon Beecher impatiently seized the papers, scratched his name on a margin as far as possible from the context, and rushed out of the room. In this unread Moulton memorandum, as Beecher was later to learn in court to his dismay, appeared these expressions: "I ask through you (Moulton) Theodore Tilton's forgiveness and humble myself before him as I do before my God. He would have been a better man in my circumstances than I have been. I can ask nothing except that he will remember all the other breasts that would ache. I will not plead for myself. I even wish that I were dead, but others must live and suffer. I will die before anyone but myself shall be inculpated. . . ." This statement, construed as a confession of guilt, was the corner-stone of the charge of adultery which Tilton later brought against Beecher. Without this Tilton would have had no basis for action. Only a grown-up boy could have been so trapped—exactly what Beecher was!

Not long after this Beecher signed, with Bowen and Tilton, through the agency of an officer of his church, a tripartite agreement in which he agreed to do everything in his power to undo the injury he had unwittingly done the Tiltons; Bowen pledged himself never to circulate rumors against Beecher, and Tilton promised to retract any charges he had made against him. Beecher felt impelled to sign this document to avert the terrible consequences to his church and work and, indeed, the whole community should the accusations against him come to public knowledge. This pledge had the effect of leaving Beecher disarmed and helpless because he alone kept it. The damaging tales were spread more assiduously than ever. Finally, the very document which Beecher

had signed to avert the disastrous consequences of publicity was published in the *New York Times*.

One of the deacons of Plymouth Church thereupon demanded an investigation but, fearing the necessary publicity, the church merely dropped Tilton's name from their rolls. Neighboring churches protested against the irregularity of this proceeding and a council of Congregational churches was held of which Dr. Leonard Bacon of New Haven became the moderator. The Council decided that, while the proceeding was irregular, the Council had no jurisdiction. On his return to New Haven Doctor Bacon gave as his opinion that Plymouth Church threw away its opportunity to vindicate its pastor and to "let vengeance come on the heads of his slanders."

Resenting or purporting to resent these comments, Tilton wrote a letter to Doctor Bacon, in which he included Beecher's signed expression of contrition, claiming that it was an admission of guilt.

When Tilton started a paper of his own, called *The Golden Age*, Beecher under Moulton's pressure invested five thousand dollars in it. When a little later Tilton, through Moulton, demanded another five thousand and threatened to publish defamatory stories if he did not receive it, Beecher at last realized that he was being blackmailed and refused. Finally his eyes were opened to what a man of merely ordinary self-protective perceptions would have seen many months before.

After Beecher's refusal to purchase its suppression in the fall of 1872, the dreaded publicity came in full fury through the publication in *Woodhull & Clafin's Weekly* of a long account by Victoria Woodhull of an alleged intrigue between himself and Mrs. Tilton. It added that Beecher had been addicted to such adventures all his life and that he preached every Sunday to twenty or more of his mistresses. The article both claimed and gave evidence of having been obtained from

Theodore Tilton who did not repudiate it. It naturally made a huge sensation. The press of the entire country and indeed of the world, reeked with it. Under the advice of such practical men as Robert Bonner, the publisher of the *New York Ledger*, Beecher disregarded it. These friends urged him not to dignify by a reply the attack of a notorious woman with no standing among reputable people.

Mrs. Tilton said something to Susan B. Anthony which she understood as a confession of guilt. Miss Anthony repeated this conversation to Mrs. Stanton and Mrs. Stanton told Isabella Beecher Hooker. Mrs. Hooker in deep distress and excitement wrote her brother what she had heard and asked him what it meant and how she could help. He replied that he could not discuss the matter and that she could help by keeping silent and silencing others as far as she could. He concluded by asking that she continue to love him. Filled with distressing fears, Mrs. Hooker went to see him. Just as in his letter, he refused to discuss the charges and merely appealed to her sisterly love and confidence. She left him more distressed than ever, and both she and her husband regarded his apparent evasion of the issue as a tacit admission of guilt. Her brother had not mentioned the tripartite agreement to which he was adhering with such quixotic tenacity. Beecher's enemies shrieked with exultation! This occurred long before the appearance of the Woodhull article.

Not so much the Woodhull attack as the thickening miasma of whispered insinuations finally led Beecher to publish in a newspaper a brief blanket denial of the charges against him. He also asked his church to investigate them and invited a group of its most eminent members to serve on an investigating committee.

Beecher's friend, Dr. Leonard Bacon of New Haven, advised him to sue Tilton for slander, but he and his church advisers felt that the church investigation would entail less

publicity because the testimony need not be published. When the committee examined Tilton, he begged them not to make his testimony public to which they readily agreed. He then gave it to the press himself, thus necessitating the publication of all the testimony. The committee, after months of investigation, completely exonerated Beecher from any wrong-doing with Mrs. Tilton or any other woman, although mildly censuring him for "errors in judgment."

While this verdict brought enormous relief to Beecher, his church and his friends, the cynics naturally claimed that he had been merely whitewashed by a hand-picked jury. Among the hundreds of letters which he received was one from President Porter of Yale which read:

"I have been on the point of writing to you . . . to express my unabated confidence and my increasing sympathy for you in your great trial. . . . I believe it will be accepted as true by all, except sons of Belial, and those who have been committed against you in decided partisanship. More than this I think that it will secure you the warm sympathy of multitudes whom you have not reached, or only slightly, before this, and that you will be held in higher honor than ever for integrity of purpose and generosity of self-sacrifice, and that your example, while it will teach discretion from your weakness, will enforce in a manifestly more impressive way, the dignity and strength of a willingness to suffer in silence that others might be spared. . . ."<sup>2</sup>

Tilton was left in a position where he must either push his charges or retract them or stand before the community as a practically self-confessed slanderer. He chose to stake everything on a lawsuit. Setting aside his charge of "improper proposals," upon which no legal action could be based, and casting to the winds his dramatic assertion, "My wife is as

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<sup>2</sup> *A Biography of Henry Ward Beecher*, by William C. Beecher and Samuel Scoville.

pure as an angel in Heaven," he sued Beecher for alienation of affections involving adultery.

The legal trial lasted for further months. The press reeled and wallowed in *filth*. Beecher commented wearily that the papers devoted more space to his trial than to all the battles of the Civil War. Some wit remarked that the Beecher trial abolished privacy just as the Civil War abolished slavery.

The jury first selected had to be redrawn because it was found that the foreman had been offered ten thousand dollars to vote against Beecher. The real issue appears to have been lost sight of and the trial to have degenerated into a kind of free-for-all fight, under legal supervision, between Beecher's enemies and his friends. His eminent counsel would seem to have been eminently unsuited to conduct that type of case.

The jury finally disagreed, nine jurors voting for Beecher and three against him. It was subsequently disclosed that, just as a unanimous decision had been reached, one of the jurors boasted that he had made a large bet with a relative that Beecher would be cleared. That so enraged three of his fellow-jurors that they changed their votes. This result was hailed by Beecher's friends as a virtual acquittal and by his enemies as a Scotch verdict.

Shortly after this trial Mrs. Moulton, who had testified against Beecher in support of her husband's contentions, was dropped by Plymouth Church, just as Tilton had been. Again complaint was made that the church had acted in an irregular way. New rumors against Beecher and new criticisms of his church arose until, finally, it was decided to ask for a review of the conduct of both church and pastor by an advisory council representative of the Congregational churches. Such a council was called in 1876, made up of two hundred and fifty representatives of the denomination from all parts of the country from the Atlantic Ocean to the Mississippi River. Some of them believed Beecher guilty.

This body reviewed for a third time all the evidence and heard the witnesses. Dr. Leonard Bacon was again chosen as moderator. Before the council dissolved they appointed a commission of five members to receive within sixty days any new charges which any one might wish to bring against Beecher or any new evidence that might come to light. No new charges or new evidence were submitted. At the close of its work the council reported: "We hold the pastor of this church, as we and all others are bound to hold him, innocent of the charges reported against him until they have been substantiated by proof, and therefore we continue to extend to him our Christian fellowship and sympathy." With the expiration of the sixty days this exoneration became final.

During all these harrowing months Beecher's brave wife had sat beside him in the crowded trial rooms, sharing his humiliating notoriety and giving him in public as well as in private the support of her love and her confidence in his innocence.

The legal trial alone cost Beecher one hundred and eighteen thousand dollars and almost ruined him, in spite of the generosity of his church in raising his salary to one hundred thousand dollars for that year. The expenses of his accusers must have been comparable. Although poor themselves, they never lacked funds for the prosecution. Beecher's many enemies, among whom were the beneficiaries of commercialized vice, political corruptionists, including his first enemy of Amherst College days, and even the rigidly orthodox, must have contributed handsomely.

During all these years Beecher not only kept on with his preaching and all his church work but the fruits of the work were never more apparent. He warned his people that they must not allow themselves to become absorbed in his troubles. He himself would not discuss his case except with his lawyers and not even with them on Saturdays because, as he put it, "You cannot raise cream if you keep the milk in the pan stirring."

William A. Beach, the chief counsel for Beecher's accusers, according to the *Albany Law Journal*, declared that, although he believed Beecher guilty when he took the case, he became convinced of his innocence early in the trial and that "his appearance and utterance when he asserted his innocence on the witness stand were the most sublime and overpowering exhibition of the majesty of human nature he ever beheld. He could not understand how any one could resist that solemn avowal. 'I felt and feel now,' said he, 'that we were a pack of hounds trying in vain to drag down a noble lion.'" Justice Neilson, who presided at the legal trial, gave public demonstration of his belief in Beecher's innocence by presiding seven years later at a huge testimonial dinner which was given him by his fellow-townsmen at the Brooklyn Academy of Music on his seventieth birthday. Justice Roger A. Pryor, the associate counsel for Beecher's accusers, said to me twenty-five years ago: "Whenever I go to the Borough of Brooklyn and see the statue of Beecher standing under the windows of the court room where we sought to drag his name in the mire, I say to myself, 'How gloriously history has vindicated him and condemned us!'"

Meantime both Tilton and Moulton revealed themselves as blackmailers steeped in such immorality as they had tried to fasten upon Beecher. Moulton's standing in the business community was so damaged that he lost his lucrative position, one of the chief requisites for which was a reputation which at least on the surface appeared to be good. Tilton was unable to secure any position which *his vanity would permit him to accept*. After further court exposures had destroyed what shreds of reputation he had left, leaving his wife and children to shift for themselves, he drifted to Paris where he lived the remainder of his life as a hack writer and literary odd-job man in the American colony of the Latin quarter. There he died friendless and in poverty.

Theodore Bacon in his *Life of Leonard Bacon* gives this illuminating remark made by Beecher himself to his lawyers when they were apologizing for disturbing him on Sunday about some matter relating to the case, "Gentlemen, we have good authority for holding that it is lawful to draw up an ass from a pit on the Sabbath day. There never was a bigger ass nor a deeper pit. . . ." Undoubtedly he had in mind his grievous mistake in trustfully signing, unread, the Moulton memorandum. Is not that remark the simplest explanation of the whole incredible mess? And I wonder if even his adoring sister, Harriet, did not in her heart agree? She remarked in a letter to George Eliot shortly after the trial: "My brother is hopelessly generous and confiding. His inability to believe evil is something incredible and so has come all this suffering." General Grant once said to Dr. Andrew D. White, "Beecher is a great, noble-hearted boy." Indeed he was a grown-up boy and he showed about as much worldly wisdom in trying to extricate himself from the toils in which his enemies enmeshed him as a boy might have been expected to show.

Beecher swam in a sea of the emotion and sentiment so characteristic of his time, and in his weaker moments his sentiment slopped over into sentimentality. Tilton and Moulton knew all too well how to play upon these emotions and evoke this sentimentality. Certainly no man's strength and weakness were ever more closely allied. His emotional nature, his sentiment and even his sentimentality, were the secret of his phenomenal power to move men by his preaching and his oratory, just as they were the chief cause of his one-time bottomless sea of troubles. Edward Eggleston is quoted by Lyman Abbott as saying, "I never knew a person who knew man so well and men so ill as Henry Ward Beecher." That was undoubtedly true to a degree but it needs modification. Beecher with his bigness of heart was preeminently a doctor of souls. He sought out rather than avoided men with diseased minds just

as a doctor of bodies seeks out rather than shuns men with diseased bodies. He continued to hope against hope until the end that he could help, could save the souls of the very enemies who were trying to crush him. When, according to Lyman Abbott, one of his accusers became years later heavily involved in business difficulties, he said to Abbott with tears in his eyes: "I would like to lend some money to —, and I think I could raise it but I suppose it would not do. It would be misunderstood. . . ." Call it nobility or sentimentality or what you will, it was constitutionally impossible for Henry Ward Beecher to hate his enemies!

Beecher's tribute to Grant at the time of the latter's death might with equal fitness have been Grant's tribute to Beecher: "Men without faults are apt to be men without force. A round diamond has no brilliancy. Lights and shadows, hills and valleys, give beauty to the landscape. The faults of great and generous natures are often overripe goodness or the shadows which their virtues cast."

## CHAPTER XXI

### HENRY WARD BEECHER

#### VINDICATION

AFTER the trials Henry Ward Beecher did more lecturing than ever before. He had two objects. He was eager to rehabilitate his reputation with the people and he was badly in need of money because of the terrific legal expenses he had been obliged to incur. He placed himself under the management of Major James B. Pond. The curiosity to see him was so great that Major Pond had no difficulty in booking dates, but it was not so easy to secure for him respectful treatment from the public. During their early tours, according to Major Pond, Beecher was often received by the crowds, when entering a city or town, with jeers, cat-calls and obscene taunts. Besides his lecture he usually arranged to address a huge outdoor gathering. Almost without exception he so won over the jeering and cynical crowd that before he left town they gave him a spontaneous ovation.

When Beecher and Pond were on their way to a lecture in Richmond, Virginia, in January, 1877,<sup>1</sup> Pond received as they were leaving Baltimore this wire from the man in charge: "No use coming. Beecher will not be allowed to speak in Richmond. No tickets sold." He slipped the wire into his pocket without mentioning it to Beecher and they went ahead. They found the local man in a funk. He showed Pond abusive articles in the local papers and circulars which rivaled in vituperative epithets the billboards which had greeted Beecher in England fourteen years before.

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<sup>1</sup>Described by Pond in an address before the Long Island Historical Society.

The attendants and servants in the hotel treated Beecher with incivility. The legislature and the Tobacco Board both passed informal votes that their members should show their contempt for him by avoiding his lecture. Practically every member of the legislature and the Tobacco Board attended. Each man was there in the thought that he could safely go since none of his colleagues would be present. They appreciated the joke.

As Pond was about to present Beecher, the local agent warned him: "Don't you introduce Mr. Beecher. The gallery is full of eggs. You will have trouble." There was not a woman present. No southerner would allow the women of his family to hear such a man as Henry Ward Beecher.

When Pond and Beecher came onto the platform cat-calls were followed by a rebel yell which made the windows rattle. After some minutes, during a lull in the tumult, Beecher got over some jibes at the legislature which made the crowd laugh. Taking advantage of this opening, he began his lecture on *The Ministry of Wealth*. The crowd became as quiet as a Plymouth Church congregation. He concluded with an extemporaneous tribute to the state of Virginia as "The Mother of Presidents," and left the hall amid wild applause. No sooner had he reached his hotel than a delegation of prominent Virginians, headed by the Lieutenant-Governor, called to congratulate him and to urge him to speak the next day so their "women folks" might hear him. Beecher replied that he was simply a piece of artillery that Pond hauled about the country and touched off where he pleased so that they would have to ask him. The schedule was so full that Pond could not arrange it. As the delegation left, Beecher threw himself into a chair, exclaiming: "Don't you think we've captured Richmond?"

Such triumphs were repeated in all parts of the country. The prejudice and hostility grew less and less. "Between September twenty-first, '76, and May fourteenth, '77—thirty-

three and a half weeks," said Pond in the same address, "Mr. Beecher delivered one hundred and thirty-five lectures, travelling upwards of twenty-seven thousand miles. . . . He lectured and preached two hundred and thirty-two times in two hundred and thirty-five days. The number of people that he addressed . . . was four hundred and sixty thousand in the short space of seven months. This is the most remarkable record of which I ever had any knowledge."

But in spite of these triumphal tours suspicion died hard and never completely vanished nor has it to this day for that matter. Pond early set his heart upon a British tour as part of Beecher's rehabilitation. When he was in England in 1876 he mentioned this hope to a prominent Englishman with whom he was dining. "I never allow that man's name to be mentioned at my table," replied his host. When Beecher made the British tour, ten years later, this very man became one of his hosts. A friend of mine, of an old New York family, who was a boy during the Beecher trials, has told me that there was in his home a similar rule against mentioning Beecher's name. When he grew up, he went to hear him speak and to his surprise found him, he said, "instead of the kind of person I expected, a good and great man."

As if to arouse still further the suspicions of the strait-laced and the orthodox Beecher came out in support of the then new and revolutionary doctrine of evolution. He had had a kind of theory of evolution of his own long before he had ever heard of Darwin, Huxley or Spencer. He claimed there was no conflict between science and religion—that the laws of Nature were the laws of God. At a dinner given to Herbert Spencer in New York he proclaimed Jesus as the first scientist and Paul as the first evolutionist. This was blasphemy to the great majority of church-members of that day. Beecher himself was a little puzzled by his efforts to reconcile his belief in a loving Heavenly Father, who counted the hairs of our heads and took account of every sparrow, with the ruth-

less unmorality of the laws of Nature. But, like most men who come to their beliefs more through feeling than thought, he was never a stickler for logic.

In his book, *Evolution and Religion*, he said: "Religion is simply right living. In both Old and New Testament it is called Righteousness. It begins as a seed. It develops as a growth. It is relative to the individual characteristics, to the age, the institutions, the whole economy of life." And in this book he gives this definition of God: "God is that circle into which human consciousness and experience have poured all the qualities that have been proved by the human race to be admirable, above reproach, transcendent." One may imagine how much this God would appeal to the average church-member of fifty years ago, whose God was the Personal Ruler of the Universe, who, in the words of the old hymn, "sat on no precarious throne nor borrowed leave to be." Indeed, some of the members of the Congregational Association, made up of Congregational ministers of New York and Brooklyn, protested against these views. Beecher thereupon resigned from the Association so as not to embarrass his fellow-clergymen who did not agree with him. In doing so he read before one of their meetings a confession of faith which sounded almost as overwhelmingly orthodox as did his examination before the Old-School Presbytery as a young preacher on the threshold of his career in Indiana. He believed in the virgin birth, in the divinity of Christ, the miracles and even in the Trinity; in fact, he believed in most of the doctrines of Calvinism, except total depravity, eternal punishment and vicarious sin through Adam's fall.

In a letter to a fellow-minister he gave his own explanation of his apparent inconsistency: "The underlying philosophy of these great cardinal facts is not that of the Church. It is just there that I am a heretic. I hold to the great facts of Man's sin, conversion, redemption and salvation by Jesus Christ but not to the old philosophy of them. New light has

come not only out of God's word but also out of His other revelations." Surely it is not surprising that his uncanny breadth of view, like that of his father before him, aroused suspicion, not only among his natural enemies, but among many more charitable critics! His fellow-members approved the expression of his views and urged him to reconsider his resignation but he insisted, no doubt wisely, upon resigning. "Only let the common people read and believe," he commented in a letter, "and in the next generation I shall be orthodox enough."

In the Cleveland-Blaine campaign of 1884 Beecher horrified his Republican friends and associates by declaring for Cleveland, not only declaring for him but speaking for him. For years he had been watching with growing concern the rising tide of corruption in the party which he had helped to found. He was alarmed by the increasingly sinister influence of what we now call Big Business in politics. He believed that Blaine, because of his temperament and associations, was the last man to take a stand against these insidious dangers. On the other hand, he had watched with ever-increasing admiration the homely honesty with which Cleveland had stood against the machinations of politicians and governed the state of New York in the interests of the people.

Although quite unaware of it, Beecher had exercised a direct influence upon Cleveland's career. When Cleveland was seventeen he had heard him preach a sermon on the careers of two men, one of whom had taken duty as his guide and the other his own pleasure.<sup>2</sup> At a Beecher memorial meeting in 1903, Cleveland recalled this experience with the comment, "What this sermon has been to me in all these years I alone know." Just as Grover Cleveland was the greatest native-born American whom Beecher influenced so was Michael

<sup>2</sup>"Beecher and Cleveland: A Sermon That Made a President," by Paul Weyland in September-October issue of *The Methodist Review*, 1918.

Pupin, the scientist and inventor, the most outstanding among the foreign born. "Beecher was the sunrise," Pupin said in his autobiography, "which dispelled much of that mist which prevented my eyes, just as it prevented all foreign eyes, from seeing the clear outline of American civilization."

Beecher was flooded with letters of protest on his endorsement of Cleveland from strangers, friends, members of his church and even members of his family. To such a letter from a member of his church he replied:

"Your remarkable note of August 8th is received. I have nothing to say to the general views except that every man should determine his duty for himself and respect the same liberty in other people.

"To your closing sentence, which contains the threat that, if I vote for Cleveland, you 'shall feel compelled to withdraw from your Church and your teachings' I would only say that, having profited so little by my teachings as this arrogant sentence indicates, I should certainly advise you to change your church relations in the hope of better results."

On October 22, 1884, Beecher addressed a great Cleveland meeting in the Brooklyn Rink. Richard Rogers Bowker, one of the organizers of the meeting, who sat next him on the platform, recently described it to me. Beecher had written out his speech in full, something he seldom did. When he was called upon he handed the manuscript to Bowker, with the words, "You see, if I say it right. . . ."

"In all the history of politics we do not believe that lies so cruel, so base, so atrocious, have ever been set in motion. The air is murky with the shameless stories of Mr. Cleveland's private life. To our sorrow and shame we find these cocotrix's eggs brooded and hatched by rash and credulous clergymen. They could not go to Mr. Cleveland with honest inquiry. So they opened their ears to the harlot and the drunkard. They have sought by

hint, innuendo, irresponsible slander, to poison the faith of holy men, of innocent women, and they have sought to make backbiting a *copt* virtue and to change the sanctuary into a salacious whispering gallery. Is it for our sins or for a trial of our faith that God has permitted the plagues of Egypt to revisit us? The land swarms with vermin, frogs slime our bread trays and lice crawl about our chambers. . . .

"Do timid ministers ever reflect that the guilt of a vice or a crime measures the guilt of him who charges them falsely? Slander takes on the guilt of crime alleged. True religion does not creep through twilight passages but in open, frank rejoicing, not in iniquity, but rejoicing in the truth, hoping all things. These vespertilian saints whose soft bats' wings bear them from house to house and from town to town, in the service of Baal, the God of flies and lies, will one day creep into the holes and clefts of rocks and hide themselves. . . ."

At this point the speaker interjected:

"My honored wife, unknown to me, cut from the newspapers certain passages with respect to the life of Grover Cleveland in Albany and sent them with a letter asking what truth there was in them? She received from Governor Cleveland a letter which I have had between two and three weeks which he meant to be private and marked private, but such a complexion has the canvass taken, that I telegraphed him and asked if I could use my discretion in regard to that letter and he said 'yes,' and I will read Governor Cleveland's letter:

"Executive Mansion  
"Albany, Oct. 7, '84.

"My dear Mrs. Beecher

"Your letter as you may well suppose has affected me deeply. What shall I say to one who writes so like my mother?" [After explaining in some detail how impossible it would be for him to combine the escapades with which he was charged with his laborious official duties he went on to say . . . :]



Henry Ward Beecher and his sister Harriet Beecher Stowe, in New York in 1868, when Harriet was 87 years of age and Henry Ward was 55



Henry Ward Beecher  
(1814-1887).



Mrs. Henry Ward Beecher  
(Eunice Bullard)  
(1812-1897).

"The contemptible creatures who coin and pass these things appear to think that the affair which I have not denied makes me defenseless against any and all slanders.

"As to my outward life in Buffalo the manifestation of confidence and attachment which was tendered me there by the citizens must be proof that I have not lived a disgraceful life in that city. And as to my life in Albany all statements that tend to show that it has been other than laborious and perfectly correct are utterly and in every shade untrue.

"I do not wonder that your good husband is perplexed. I honestly think I desire his good opinion more than any aid he is disposed to give me.

"I don't want him to think any better of me than I deserve nor to be deceived. Cannot I manage to see him and tell him what I cannot write? . . .

"Having written this much it occurs to me that such a long letter is unnecessary and unexpected. It is the most I have written on the subject referred to and I beg you to forgive me if your kind and touching letter has led me into any impropriety.

"Yours very sincerely,  
"Grover Cleveland"

Mrs. Beecher had been greatly alarmed by the charges of immorality against Grover Cleveland which she feared might rekindle the similar charges against her husband should he associate himself with him. Hence her letter which evoked this reply.

The reading of the letter created a sensation. After the great audience had for many minutes been swept by wave upon wave of applause, Beecher continued:

"When in the gloomy night of my own suffering, I sounded every depth of sorrow, I vowed that if God would bring the day star of hope, I would never suffer brother, friend or neighbor to go unfriended should a like serpent seek to crush him. That oath I will regard now. Because I know the bitterness of venomous lies, I will

stand against infamous lies that seek to sting to death an upright man and magistrate. Men counsel me to prudence lest I stir again my own griefs. No, I will not be prudent. If I refuse to interpose a shield of well-placed confidence between Governor Cleveland and the swarm of liars that nozzle in the mud or sling arrows from ambush, may my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth and my right hand forget its cunning. . . .”

Bowker found that in spite of his poor verbal memory, Beecher in this case followed his manuscript verbatim. This was probably one of the most carefully prepared speeches he ever made.

When Henry C. Bowen, a few weeks before this meeting, had publicly attacked Governor Cleveland as an immoral man, the *Brooklyn Daily Eagle* characterized Bowen as “the sniveling fraud who tried to destroy Rev. Henry Ward Beecher and made himself the religious decoy of one of the most shameless pack of swindlers known to this country.”<sup>8</sup>

When not long after Bowker was dining with the Beechers, Beecher remarked that he had written that day a particularly good letter which “. . . Mother [Mrs. Beecher] won’t let me send. She’ll never let me send my best letters.” A stranger had written, accusing him of being a Swedenborgian but of lacking the courage and honesty to admit it. “There are only two explanations for your extraordinary letter,” replied Beecher, “either you should be in an insane asylum or you are a lineal descendant of the ass upon which our Lord rode into Jerusalem and whose descendants have ever had the habit of confusing themselves with the rider of the original ass.” This letter, although censored by “Mother” and not mailed, was obviously preserved because it ultimately appeared, frankly unexplained, in a collection of Henry Ward Beecher letters published in the *Outlook* years after his death.

<sup>8</sup>Issue of September 4, 1894.

Beecher remarked to Bowker in 1885, apropos of the complete contrast between James Russell Lowell and Edward John Phelps, his successor as Minister to Great Britain, "I tell my people that I hope they will select as my successor a man so utterly different from me that no one will make comparisons between us." Consciously or unconsciously, "his people" certainly followed this advice when they selected as his successor Dr. Lyman Abbott who, great and good man though he was, surely could hardly have been more different from his predecessor.

On Sunday evening, February 27, 1887, in Plymouth Church, Henry Ward Beecher preached what proved to be his last sermon. He had seemed particularly well and buoyant ever since his return the previous fall from a triumphal lecture tour in the British Isles which had apparently obliterated suspicions among the British. He had resumed work on the second volume of his *Life of Jesus: The Christ*, which work had been interrupted by the trials, and he had begun his autobiography. The following Thursday, during the night, he had a stroke from which he was never fully aroused, and the next Tuesday he died. He had died just as he had expected to ever since he had those seizures of dizziness in the Fremont campaign thirty years before.

After his last sermon he had lingered in the church listening to the organ. He thought every one had gone but when he started down the aisle two homeless newsboys joined him. They had been in the habit of stealing into the church from time to time to get help or merely to get warm. With an arm around the shoulder of each waif Henry Ward Beecher walked out of his church into the night for the last time. On February 27, 1928, at a memorial service held in Plymouth Church, the Reverend Philip H. Clifford, minister of the First Reformed Church of Newark, New Jersey, described the scene. Forty-one years before he had been one of those newsboys.

The body of Henry Ward Beecher lay in state in the flower-decked church from ten o'clock in the morning until ten o'clock in the evening. Over fifty thousand people of both sexes, of every age and social condition, from statesmen and merchant princes to the two newsboys, passed in line to look for the last time upon the face of the man whose friendship had embraced all humanity. There was no crape, no mourning of any kind, he regarded all such manifestations as survivals of paganism and had firmly forbidden them. Among the floral offerings was a lusty bunch of celery which a Greek vegetable vender had brought with the entreaty, "Me want him near great preacher because he like him so good celery!"

While the family was being marshalled at the house for the drive to the cemetery, the member in charge of the arrangements said to Thomas K. Beecher, "Now, Uncle Tom, you go in the third carriage with . . . ."

"I won't either," said Thomas K., with tears in his eyes.

"Why, yes, Uncle Tom, it's all been arranged and that is where you are assigned."

"I won't go in that carriage or any other. I'm not going to traipse all over Brooklyn behind a corpse,"<sup>4</sup> and he didn't. What had a corpse to do with his vital and beloved brother!

The legislature of the state, after passing resolutions of respect to his memory, adjourned so that their members might attend the funeral. The Board of Aldermen of Brooklyn passed similar resolutions and directed the flags placed at half-mast on the public buildings. On the following Sunday a great memorial meeting of all denominations, races and nationalities, including Hebrews and Roman Catholics, was held in Plymouth Church, a meeting which fittingly symbolized Henry Ward Beecher's transcending of denominational, racial and national barriers. Spontaneously and almost without leadership his fellow-citizens organized later a great mass

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<sup>4</sup>This story was told me by William Gillette, the actor, who is a nephew-in-law of Mrs. Isabella Beecher Hooker.



The statue of Henry Ward Beecher by John Quincy Adams Ward which stands outside the Borough Hall of Brooklyn, New York.



meeting at which it was arranged to erect to his memory the statue by John Quincy Adams Ward which now stands in Brooklyn under the windows of the court-room where he was tried.

He was, like his father, so much else that it is difficult to remember, what he himself never forgot, that he was first, last and always an expounder of the life of Christ. In his closing years he said to his friend, Rossiter W. Raymond, "When I am gone do not let it be forgotten that my one aim was the winning of the souls of men. . . ."

## CHAPTER XXII

### CHARLES BEECHER: 1815-1900

#### THE HERETIC

"I WENT to college too young. Father was in a hurry to get us all through and into the ministry," said Charles Beecher in some unpublished reminiscences. He had graduated from Bowdoin College near the head of his class at the age of nineteen. With the exception of his brother, Edward, he was the only real scholar of the family. He acquired a working knowledge of eight languages. Also like his brother, Edward, he was an athlete. He was the president of his college gymnasium society. He was six feet tall and in later life weighed almost two hundred pounds. He had been prepared at the Boston Latin School and Lawrence Academy at Groton, Massachusetts, while his brother, George, was the principal.

After graduating from Bowdoin, he went to Cincinnati to study theology under his father at Lane Seminary. It was there that his unsuccessful efforts to believe Jonathan Edwards' treatise on the will, drove him to despair, agnosticism and the feeling that he must give up all thought of entering the ministry. He was passionately fond of music, and from the compulsions of his environment had almost of necessity to specialize in church music. In Boston he had attended the classes of Lowell Mason who had charge of the music in his father's church and was probably the leading church musician of his day in the country. So he determined to become an organist and musician. This decision disgusted his father who commented to Henry Ward, "Charles has founded his determination on *feeling*, his plans on *hopes*, and his arguments on *obstinacy*."

After studying and teaching music for some years in Cincinnati he went to New Orleans where he became a clerk in the office of a cotton factor and the organist in a Presbyterian church. There he married Sarah Coffin and their first child was born. There, too, he gathered the material on slavery which his sister, Harriet, used in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. And from there he went to Indianapolis to take charge of the music in the church of his brother, Henry Ward,—where through his experiences in teaching a Sunday-School class, he regained sufficient faith to go into the ministry after all.

When he was thirty-one, he was ordained and installed as pastor of a little wilderness Presbyterian church with thirteen members, at Fort Wayne, Indiana. He was sexton, bell-ringer, organist and choir leader as well as preacher. On Saturdays he swept and dusted the church, trimmed and filled the lamps.<sup>1</sup> In fact, just as had his brother, Henry Ward, in Lawrenceburg, "he did everything except come to hear himself preach."

At the dedication of his little church in Fort Wayne where both his father and his brother, Henry Ward, were present, he preached a sermon called "The Bible a Sufficient Creed," in which he said:

" . . . liberty of opinion in our theological seminaries is a mere form. To say nothing of the thumb-screw of criticism by which every original mind is tortured into negative propriety, the whole boasted liberty of the student consists in a choice of chains—a choice of handcuffs—whether he will wear the Presbyterian handcuffs or the Methodist, Baptist, Episcopal or other Evangelical handcuffs. Hence it has secretly come to pass that the ministers themselves dare not study their Bibles. . . . There is something criminal in saying anything new. It is shocking to utter words that have not the mould of age upon them. . . .

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<sup>1</sup>Unpublished recollections written by Charles Beecher's daughter, Mary Beecher Noyes.

"And what then is to be done? I know not what others may say, but if ever I shrink from declaring that the Bible, the whole Bible and nothing but the Bible is the perfect and thorough furniture of the Christian minister and the Christian church, then may my right hand forget her cunning and my tongue cleave unto the roof of my mouth."

This was a favorite Beecher objurgation.

It is difficult for the modern reader to realize how much courage it took for an obscure young minister, eighty-seven years ago, thus to defy not only the creeds of his own church but of all churches. It marked him as "unsound," and that distressing brand he bore through life. Both because of their daring and because they were uttered by a son of Lyman Beecher, these remarks, although spoken in the wilderness, were widely quoted throughout the country. They were, however, in some cases attributed to Henry Ward Beecher, thus illustrating how the better-known member of a family tends to absorb the glory. While in Fort Wayne Charles Beecher wrote his first book, *Pictures of the Virgin and Her Son*,<sup>2</sup> the story of the birth of Christ as pictured in his own mind.

From Fort Wayne, Indiana, he went in 1851 to Newark, New Jersey, where he reorganized a moribund Presbyterian church and turned it into a vigorous Congregational church. He also made himself odious to the conventional pillars of society by taking an active part both in the cause of temperance and of anti-slavery. It was from there that he furnished his sister, Harriet, with the data about the Legree of real life and the other facts about slavery which he had gathered during his life in New Orleans. It was at this time also that he accompanied her on her first trip to Europe.

When the fugitive slave law was passed, his righteous wrath boiled over in a sermon called "The Duty of Disobedience to

<sup>2</sup> See pp. 418 and 419 for Charles Beecher's bibliography.

Wicked Laws." That was too much for his fellow-ministers. They expelled him from the ministerial association of the city. It was all well enough to disapprove of slavery,—many of them sympathized with him in that,—but for a clergyman from the pulpit deliberately to tell the people that it was wicked to obey a law of the United States was really going beyond reason and common decency! The sermon was widely quoted and distributed in pamphlet form.

At the instance of his brother, Edward, he left Newark in 1856 to take the professorship of Rhetoric at Knox College in Galesburg, Illinois, but the next year he accepted a call to the Congregational Church in Georgetown, Massachusetts, where he remained with an interlude until 1881.

While his brilliant and idolized first-born son lay dying, as was then thought, of a wound received in the Battle of Gettysburg, the same battle in which his nephew, Frederick Stowe, was wounded, his enemies succeeded in having him tried for heresy before the Essex North Conference to which his church belonged. Like his father before him, he was tried for heresy but, unlike his father, he was convicted. And ironically enough, the chief charge against him was his belief in the doctrine of the pre-existence of souls as propounded by his brother, Edward, in *The Conflict of Ages*. His own church stood by him and withdrew from the Conference rather than accept the verdict. The members stood by him just as had those of his brother Henry Ward's little church in Lawrenceburg in a somewhat similar crisis. A few years later the Conference rescinded their verdict so Charles Beecher was only for a few years an officially recorded heretic. While the trial was going on, his sister, Harriet, wrote to a clergyman who she thought might have some influence on the outcome: ". . . Charles is full of imagination and loves to plunge and explore and revel in the celestial statistics and geography in years before the world was. . . . Now because certain moles and bats pick up fragments of these things and pore

over them as heresies, will you men who know better, suffer them to use you to endorse their ignorance?"

It is refreshing to learn from this remark in a letter to a parishioner, that Charles Beecher did not accept his conviction with that Christian meekness which was at that time regarded as a virtue: "I need hardly say that I regard the result of Council as not only slanderous, but mean beyond measure and as inevitably involving disgrace to all who accept it."

This conviction, although repudiated by his church, of course more deeply stamped him with the brand of "unsound" which his attack on the creeds on the threshold of his career had given him. Apparently, however, his lack of orthodoxy did not hurt his reputation among his fellow-townsman as they elected him to the legislature the next year by a heavy majority.

The year after his trial, his book, *Redeemer and Redeemed*, was published in which he affirmed his dangerous belief in the doctrine of pre-existence. He dedicated the book to his mother in these words:

#### To Roxana Beecher

I dedicate this work for the execution of which I am chiefly glad to have lived; in the hope that she will not, on account of it, be sorry for having borne me.

In the book he evolved a theology of his own, based upon ingenious and sometimes fantastic symbolic interpretations of portions of the Bible. From the modern point of view, the book is a curious mixture of real criticism and scholarship, naïve credulity and mystical rhapsody. It doubtless would have pleased Roxana Beecher—it was probably sufficiently unorthodox to have gratified her without being so much so as to have shocked her.

Like his elder sister, Harriet, and his younger sister, Isabella, Charles Beecher became interested in spiritualism and

wrote two books on it in which he advocated a kind of Christian spiritualism. Also at this time he became the musical editor of *The Plymouth Collection of Hymns and Tunes*—a book which exercised a great influence upon church music and congregational singing throughout the country.

By 1870 he was apparently overcome by the family impulse for pioneer missionary work. Shortly after receiving the letter from his sister, Harriet, urging him to become the rector of her church in Mandarin, he left his successful church at Georgetown, Massachusetts, bought a place at Newport, Florida, and preached among the abjectly poor and ignorant Negro freedmen. He tried to lead and guide them in their pathetically bungling efforts to adjust themselves to the new and difficult conditions of freedom. "I should perhaps have done them more good," he remarked, "but from some chance expression I believe, they had heard that I 'was not sound.' Poor creatures!" He also served for three years as the superintendent of public instruction for the state of Florida.

A grandson has written me of his Florida life:

"Grandfather lived in a plantation manse surrounded by live oaks. He raised wonderful flowers and had splendid specimens of 'Spanish Bayonet' and 'Century Plant.' There were pecan trees in the branches of which grew parasite mistletoe—these strange growths he would trim out and when they had dried he would carve them with his knife into heads such as a snake, duck, bird or dog and fashion the head onto a walking stick. At one time he shot a water moccasin under the house: the tanned skin was eight feet long. He had an interesting experience in making Irish potatoes grow in the warm southern soil. The plant would all grow to top with no potatoes. Finally, he succeeded by planting in October or November and getting a crop in January and February. He took special pride in two fig trees. One winter he painted his

house, preparing rather crudely made raw materials and mixing them himself, erecting his own staging; his only helpers were three grandsons aged seven, eight and nine years.

"Both in Newport and Wysox, Pennsylvania, he was a voluntary weather observer for the Government and his records are still in the official files."

This letter was written by G. Harold Noyes, one of the grandsons, who is himself an official weather observer and at this writing in charge of the Boston Weather Bureau. In the same letter the writer tells of going skating with his grandfather in Georgetown when the latter was sixty-eight years old.

After leaving Florida, Charles Beecher returned for a few years to his church in Georgetown, and then went to Wysox, Pennsylvania, where he preached until his retirement in 1893 at the age of seventy-eight. His brother, Thomas, arrived in Wysox one Sunday morning to preach the baccalaureate sermon at the graduation exercises of a near-by institute. He reached the church after the services had started. Charles Beecher, seeing his brother enter the church, walked down from the pulpit, threw his arms around him and kissed him on both cheeks. The comments of the undemonstrative Scotch-Presbyterian-members of the congregation when they got home, may be imagined.

In 1868 Charles Beecher's son, Lieutenant Frederick Beecher, who had recovered from his well-nigh mortal wound received in the Battle of Gettysburg, was killed in a battle in Yuma County, Colorado, between Forsythe's Scouts and Indians. This engagement is now known as the Battle of Beecher Island and the spot where Lieutenant Beecher fell is marked by the Beecher Island Monument.

After his retirement Charles Beecher returned to Georgetown where he lived with a daughter until his death in 1900. He was the last to die of Lyman Beecher's seven sons. In his

address at his funeral his successor, Reverend Henry R. McCartney, said: "It is said of Lamartine that the mob laid down their arms before him because he represented seventy years of noble living. We lay aside all bitter and selfish thoughts in the presence of one who so perfectly represented the simplicity and the glory of a true character." They closed the service by singing, "We are on our journey home."<sup>8</sup> one of Charles Beecher's most stirring hymns.

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<sup>8</sup> See Appendix, p. 404 for hymn.

## CHAPTER XXIII

### ISABELLA BEECHER: 1822-1907

#### THE SUFFRAGIST

HANDSOME nineteen-year-old Isabella Beecher, the beauty of the family, sat day after day in the little law office of her young husband, John Hooker, in Farmington, Connecticut,<sup>1</sup> reading Blackstone with him. The quiet of the diminutive office was only broken by the buzz of a fly or the rattle of a passing chaise on the village street. The young people's legal studies had not yet been interrupted by clients. That was in 1841.

Four years previous young Isabella had left the home of her father, Dr. Lyman Beecher, in Cincinnati to come to Hartford to study in the Hartford Female Seminary, the school which her eldest sister, Catharine, had founded fourteen years before when the Beechers were living in Litchfield, and Isabella, the fourth daughter and ninth child, was the current baby. She had lived with her sister, Mrs. Thomas C. Perkins, and had come to find her conversations with young John Hooker, a clerk in her brother-in-law's office, far more absorbing than even her most interesting studies. Young John was the sixth in descent from Thomas Hooker, the founder of the state of Connecticut and the author of the world's first written constitution—not that all that was of much interest to the young lovers—they were looking forward, not back. When they were married, they went to live with her husband's parents in Farmington where the young man opened the little office and

<sup>1</sup>For list of places in this country where the Beechers lived see Appendix, pp. 405 and 406.

began the long watchful wait for clients. While waiting, he studied his Blackstone, and his bride said she would come and study with him—he could read law to her in the daytime, and she would read literature to him in the evening.

The idealistic young lawyer worshiped his mistress, the Law—when all human relations came under her sway, justice would rule supreme. The idyllic peace, outward and inward, of the lovers remained unbroken until they came to Blackstone's chapter, "Domestic Relations and Reciprocal Duties of Husband and Wife." "By marriage the husband and wife are one person in law," stated Blackstone, "that is, the very being or legal existence of the woman is suspended during the marriage or, at least, is incorporated and consolidated into that of the husband under whose wing protection and cover she performs everything. . . ."

"Is that the justice which your Law furnishes to us women?" exclaimed the beautiful bride, her eyes flashing with indignation. Young John Hooker tried to defend his patron saint, Mr. Blackstone, but he made a poor fist of it, just as had Lyman Beecher when he had tried to defend Jonathan Edwards against Isabella's mother, Harriet Porter, when she had been a beautiful indignant bride.

But there was worse and more of it. The bride discovered that the common law gave the husband the right "to restrain his wife by domestic chastisement" and the civil law had even expanded that shocking authority by giving the husband the right for certain misbehavior, "by whips and cudgels vigorously to punish a wife" and for lesser offenses, "to use moderate whipping." The young wife felt deeply distressed and outraged by these discoveries, and read widely seeking light which finally she found in John Stuart Mill's *On Liberty and the Subjection of Woman*.

So chained was she by the sex inhibitions of her time and the sense of propriety of her conventional, though sympathetic, young lawyer husband that her feeling of outrage for her sex

smoldered inwardly. At length the Hookers moved into Hartford where John Hooker opened a law office with Joseph R. Hawley who later became a United States Senator. They now had a son and two daughters.

That was the situation when in 1861 Anna Dickinson came to Hartford to speak against slavery. John and Isabella went with keen anticipation to hear the nineteen-year-old girl speaker, but also with some trepidation. They didn't know whether conservative Hartford would tolerate a woman speaker, but the eloquent young girl carried all before her; her auditors were too thrilled to be shocked. After the meeting Isabella, in a transport of excitement and delight, embraced the young speaker and bore her home for the night. The two talked all night—the older woman poured out her soul to the young girl and then tensely absorbed every suggestion Anna had to make. She told Mrs. Hooker of Mrs. John Stuart Mill's article in the *Westminster Review* on "The Enfranchisement of Women." She told her about Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony. But even in her exaltation of mind, Isabella could not bring herself to believe that those shocking names stood for anything fine.

Three years later, Mrs. Caroline Severance, of Boston, fully and finally won Isabella Beecher Hooker to the suffrage cause. With Mrs. Severance, William Lloyd Garrison and others, she founded the New England Woman Suffrage Association. At the organizing meeting she met, and was greatly impressed by, the veteran suffrage leader, Paulina Wright Davis, who invited her to come to her home in Providence, Rhode Island, and meet Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony.

Before this Providence meeting broke up, Isabella said to the three suffrage leaders: "While I have been mourning in secret over the degradation of woman, you have been working through opposition and obloquy to raise her to self-respect and self-protection through enfranchisement, knowing, that with *political rights* come equal social and industrial opportunities.

Henceforth, I will at least share your work and your obloquy." And to that pledge she ever remained faithful.

A few years later she wrote "A Mother's Letters to a Daughter on Woman's Suffrage," which were published anonymously in *Putnam's Monthly*, and the next year she organized "The Connecticut Woman Suffrage Association and Society for the Study of Political Science." "A Mother's Letters to a Daughter on Woman's Suffrage" were issued as a tract and widely distributed by that Society.

In 1870 Mrs. Hooker went on a suffrage speaking tour in the Middle West. Writing from Chicago to her son, Edward, she said:

"Tell little Mary to sit right down and tell me what they are doing and saying while I am away, and how much she limps now and whether the chestnuts are falling thick and fast and how many apples we are going to have . . . and whether Ned, the horse, limps any and Ned, the boy, teases her any and how many games of euchre she plays with Dick [Dr. Richard Burton, poet and lecturer] . . . and whether Aunt Sarah feels better . . . and whether she keeps the table well set . . . and whether there are any more big snakes around . . . and whether the pond has been graveled and has water in it and a fountain playing . . . and how the meat man behaves, now Sarah has gone and whether his bill is a good deal less, now I am away with my enormous appetite . . . and how her mother likes the new clothes line that Willie [William Gillette, the actor] has put up. . . . All this and much more I shall hope to hear about when I get to Des Moines. . . . I do wish Willie would write me. I like his letters so much. Suppose you write a joint letter and make some fun for me . . . no one understands that better than he does. . . ."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup>Now in the possession of her granddaughter, Mrs. Walter Gordon Merritt.

And this was on the mind of a woman, who, in the popular belief of the day, by her unsexing suffrage activities had abjured all thought of home or family or household interests! As a matter of fact, she was a model wife, mother and house-keeper, a good cook, a devoted and successful gardener and a past-mistress at exquisite needlework. She made all her husband's handkerchiefs.

The next year Mrs. Hooker organized in Washington at her own expense a national convention "for the purpose of calling the attention of Congress to the fact that women were already citizens of the United States under the Constitution, interpreted by the Declaration of Independence, and only needed recognition, by that body, to become voters."<sup>8</sup> She secured the signatures of many thousands of women to a petition to Congress in which they declared their belief, that they had the right to the franchise. Mrs. Hooker was invited to present her argument in person before the Committee on the Judiciary of the United States Senate.

In her first flush of enthusiasm, after making her argument before the members of the Committee and as many others as could crowd into the committee room, she wrote her husband:

" . . . I was perfectly infused with it and inspired by it—it flowed out of my inner consciousness as if it were a part of my very being. . . . I dare not tell you all that I see in the future and know is to come to pass shortly. I would not put it on paper even if I had time and strength. God knows it and that is enough—but be sure that *woman's hour* has come. . . . I find such loving and supporting friends who *believe* that I am raised up to strike this last blow for freedom. . . . "

Evidently she agreed with the "supporting friends" because in a further letter, written a few days later, she commented,

<sup>8</sup> "Memories of My Eighty-Third Birthday," by Isabella Beecher Hooker in the *Connecticut Magazine* for May, 1905.



Isabella Brechin Fisher



Isabella Beecher Hooker in the black silk dress in which she addressed the Committee on the Judiciary of the United States Senate, on the franchise for women in 1871.

" . . . I am every day touched by indications trivial in themselves that I am called to a great and holy work whereof no one can prophesy the end. . . . "

Her gentle, devoted, conventional, publicity-abhorring husband must have read these letters with very mixed emotions. She was now a true Beecher in full career, anointed of the Lord to lead in a great cause!

Mrs. Hooker's efforts brought her not only "supporting friends" but active, venomous and unscrupulous enemies. Because of her shamelessness, as her enemies represented it, in actually appearing before a committee of men they accused her of promiscuity. One would suppose from their comments, that she had gone before the Senate Committee in the costume of Lady Godiva.

And when she returned to her home in Hartford, she was both shunned and denounced because of her immodest behavior. The society leaders of the complacent little city hastened to put her name on the black list. Like the other Beechers, she was constantly violating the rules of polite society. While this society ostracism seems merely amusing to us, from the prospective of sixty years, to be so misjudged was not amusing to this home-loving mother and wife.

A few months later, she wrote her husband as he was sailing for Europe: ". . . Little do you know what it has cost me to tear myself away from you of late, even a little, and give a part of myself to womanhood—that intangible but yet sad reality that has thrust itself between me and all I hold dear. . . . Remember that I do not love you any the less, that I love truth and justice beyond all things else," she added later.

Senator Charles Sumner characterized her argument before the Senate Committee as "able, lucid and powerful," and Susan B. Anthony called her "the soundest constitutional lawyer in the country."

She had introduced in the Connecticut legislature in 1870, a bill giving married women the same property rights as their

husbands, a bill drawn by her lawyer husband. This bill, reintroduced at every session, was finally passed and became a law in 1877, thanks to the vigorous backing of the Hookers' intimate friend, Governor Richard Hubbard, who declared that it was preposterous that his mother should not have the same property rights that he had. The next year, Mrs. Hooker had a bill introduced, granting the suffrage to the women of the state. This bill was reintroduced and rejected at every session as long as she lived. This recurrent effort brought her constant ridicule but not the franchise.

Some years later Mrs. Hooker, after the death of her daughter, Mary, like her sister, Mrs. Stowe, after the death of her son, Henry, became interested in spiritualism. She made a study of the subject and gave a series of lectures about it. She also wrote her one book entitled *Womanhood: Its Sanctities and Fidelities*.

*Womanhood*, the first section of this little book, urged the duty and privilege of mothers to instruct their children in proper sex relations. "One generation of instructed mothers," she declared, "would do more for the renovation of the race than all other human agencies combined. . . ." The next section gave her correspondence with John Stuart Mill on the relation between the sexes apropos of his tribute to his dead wife in his *Subjection of Women*. The final section, made up largely of quotations from Mrs. Josephine E. Butler and other leading English men and women who were opposed to the licensing of prostitutes by the state, was called *State Patronage of Vice*, and was addressed "To My Countrywomen." Here, Isabella made *her* declaration! This little book, written solely for the promotion of purity and morality, was execrated as obscene literature.

In 1888, she was one of a small group of women leaders who convened in Washington the first international convention of women and before this convention she read the first printed argument on the Constitutional rights of American women.

Four years later, the state of Connecticut held a Constitutional Convention. For presentation to this convention, Mrs. Hooker prepared a memorial from the Connecticut Woman's Suffrage Society, asking that the word "male" be stricken from the article conferring the franchise in the State Constitution. Those in control not only refused to permit her to read her memorial before the Convention, or to appear before the committee to which it was referred, but even refused to receive copies of the argument in its support, thousands of which she had had printed. The political leaders of the state were tired of the irrepressible Isabella Beecher Hooker. Suffrage efforts had ceased to have the interest of novelty and had not yet come within the scope of practical politics—at any rate in conservative Connecticut. So by slamming every door in her face, the politicians tried to discourage her. This they failed to do but they did deeply wound her. She had idealized her state and its leaders. She remarked sadly that all chance was now gone that the men of the state would ever voluntarily grant to the women their rights.

Perhaps in part as an offset for her shabby treatment by the Constitutional Convention, the Governor appointed her as a representative of the state on the "Board of Lady Managers" of the Columbian Exposition in Chicago. There, she prepared what she termed a universal litany which she read before a huge religious service of all nations. It was made up of strikingly similar passages from the religious writings of the ancient Egyptians, Hebrews, Chinese, Buddhists, Hindus, Moslems and Christians.

Her service on this Board closed Mrs. Hooker's public career, although she continued for many years to make occasional public addresses and kept up a large correspondence with public men and women right up to the time of her death. In fact, at that very time she was corresponding with President Eliot of Harvard, about certain changes that she thought should be made in the requirements for the medical degree. One

might ask what earthly business of Mrs. Hooker's could be the requirements of the Harvard Medical School? Like her eldest sister, Catharine, and, in lesser degree, the other members of the family, she believed that anything was her business, all the way from rearranging her daughter-in-law's furniture to changing the legal and civic status of women, which gave her opportunity to help either an individual, a group of individuals or humanity at large. Although none of his other children strayed quite as far from Calvinism as did Isabella, nevertheless, just as truly as did her father, Lyman Beecher, she felt herself commissioned of God to help carry out His will. This gave her complete self-assurance, and naturally tended to develop an autocratic manner.

The writer's father, Charles Edward Stowe, once read in the *Hartford Courant* that he was to preach in the Unity Church the next Sunday. That was the first he had heard of it. Knowing that his aunt, Mrs. Hooker, was a dominant factor in the affairs of that church, he went to her and asked her what she knew about the announcement. She replied simply, "Yes, Charlie, it's true that you are to preach for us and I am so sorry that I forgot to let you know. . . ."

Mrs. Hooker never made a more characteristic remark than when she said to her little granddaughter and namesake, Isabel Hooker: "Isabel, I don't ask you to keep the Ten Commandments—you probably will anyway—but if I ever catch you being bored I'll disown you."

To her friend, Wilbur F. Gordy, the educator and historian, she said in her closing years, "I am prepared to accept this life as the end," and then she added abruptly, "provided it's the end for everybody else!" She didn't propose to have any one sneak off and enjoy a Heaven from which she was excluded.

On her eightieth birthday, February 22, 1902, Mrs. Hooker through the press invited all the preachers and teachers of the city to call upon her during the morning, afternoon or eve-

ning to help her honor the memory of her husband's ancestor, the Reverend Thomas Hooker, the founder of the state. Her husband had died the previous year. She urged her friends to come also and any others who might care to do so. In spite of a driving snowstorm which became a blizzard, a steady stream of people called from ten in the morning until ten at night. There were the great and the near great, old and young, rich and poor, educated and uneducated, suffrage leaders, cranks and freaks. Among the callers was the Roman Catholic Bishop of the city who took especial pleasure in paying his tribute to this daughter of Lyman Beecher—that redoubtable enemy of his church. There were, too, the leading Jewish rabbis and Negro preachers, and the Irish Mayor of the city who at Mrs. Hooker's request made a speech. In short, it was a typical Beecher gathering—nothing polite nor select about it, but entirely consistent with Isabella Beecher Hooker's motto: "The world is my country; to do good is my religion."

When the last straggling caller had left and Mrs. Hooker's supporting relatives, ready to drop with exhaustion, turned to her solicitously to inquire how she had survived the ordeal, she replied brightly: "Oh, I'm all right. I'm going to hop into bed now and try and get caught up in my reading. I've got that big pile of 'Nation's' to go through, that I've been too busy to read as they came week by week. . . ."

A few months before she died in 1907 she said to her granddaughter, Isabel, "I can't stand all the suffering in the world!"

"Well, grandmother, you have the satisfaction of knowing you have always done more than your share to relieve it."

"That's the point. As long as I could help, I could stand it, but now that I can no longer help, I can't stand it!"

## CHAPTER XXIV

### THOMAS K. BEECHER: 1824-1900

#### AN OUTCAST PREACHER MAKES GOOD

ALTHOUGH not a controversialist like his father, Lyman; an orator like his brother, Henry Ward; or an author like his sister, Harriet; without ambition for this world's recognition; and spending his life in a small city, Thomas Kinnicut Beecher, nevertheless, had thrust upon him a reputation second only to theirs. That his father early appreciated his qualities is shown by a letter of introduction he gave him at the age of twenty-two to his old friend, Doctor Taylor, the President of the Yale Theological Seminary. "He [Thomas] possesses, I think, a mind not inferior to any of my sons, and quickness, depth and comprehension of discrimination surpassing almost any mind I have come in contact with." Some one said of Thomas K. Beecher in middle life that he was everything and its opposite. Mrs. Ford of Elmira, the step-grandmother of Mrs. Samuel Clemens, once remarked: "When I see Mr. Beecher in the pulpit I think he should never come out of it, but when I see him out of the pulpit I think he never should go into it!"

Lyman Beecher's ardent resolution that all his sons should be preachers was almost relinquished in the case of Thomas because of his strong aptitude for science. In a letter to Henry Ward in Indianapolis in 1845 he said of Thomas:

"His bent of mind is so strong for the natural sciences and his originality and power of mind and mechanical execution and his attained qualifications are so distinguished for a professor of chemistry and natural philosophy that my heart had let go of its favorite purpose

that he should preach; and yet I feel reproved almost in giving it up, as if my faith had failed, though, as in the case of Charles, I do not give it up, and only yield to an irresistible Providence, still hoping and desiring he may be a minister. . . .”

Thomas's affectionate though amused admiration for his father is shown in this, his contribution to the *Autobiography and Correspondence of Lyman Beecher*:

“. . . How unlike a student's his room always was, and what singular ways of studying! Do you remember the gun he used to keep loaded by the door ready for the pigeons that in those days came over by millions (1833-35). Father would sit in his study-chair, deeply occupied and set me by the cocked gun to watch for game. But he would hear the roar of wings as soon as I; and, with remarkable jumps for a divinity doctor, would get out the door, have his shot at the birds and then go back to his pen.

“His spectacles used to delay him, and I well remember his delight with a new pair which he brought home, each glass composed of a plane half and a convex half. Looking through the convex lower section he wrote metaphysics; through the upper he shot pigeons.

“Have you ever seen Father when a fit of order and arrangement came over him? I remember five green boxes, say twenty inches square, in which the dear man again and again determined to put his disordered MSS., arranged and classified. ‘There, Tom, keep my lectures all in this box No. 1; put my revival sermons in this; and then, ‘Let's see,’ and he would begin to look over his piles and to devise a third class. He would pile them up on the floor methodically. ‘Now, don't let any one touch 'em, and tomorrow we'll finish up.’

“Alas! What with Tip [his terrier] and Father himself, in a hurry to find some dimly remembered fragment, the piles soon became remedilessly confused, then scattered, until a distant tomorrow came to re-begin and never finish the re-ordering of his MSS. At one of my last visits

to him in Boston he fondly embraced me saying, 'Oh, Tom! I wish you could live with me and help me arrange my papers!' "

Thomas was born in Litchfield in 1824, and after a miscellaneous schooling, took his college course at Illinois College in Jacksonville, Illinois, during the presidency of his brother, Edward, where he graduated in 1843. Retrospectively, the outstanding event of his college days was his acquaintance with Abraham Lincoln—then a young and unknown lawyer who had recently come to Springfield to practise.

The first year after graduation he worked as a journeyman mechanic, making astronomical instruments; and, the second, as assistant to the Professor of Chemistry and Pharmacy at the Ohio Medical College. His demonstration of aptitude during these years led his father to write of his strong bent of mind for the natural sciences, and almost to relinquish his determination to make a preacher of him. He became and remained an amateur scientist, more particularly a chemist and an astronomer, as well as an all-round mechanic or workman, as he proudly called himself. He was, indeed, a machinist, carpenter, painter, paper-hanger, and clock repairer. He could build a house and understood the construction, repairing and handling of locomotives and ships. From time to time during his career he worked at these trades as an avocation and received the market rate of wages. When the writer visited the Mission Inn at Riverside, California, in 1924, he was told that Thomas K. Beecher had helped to build it. He came there in 1884 when the Inn was just opened and the building not completely finished. Requesting and receiving permission to join the workmen, he worked with them for several weeks. He was far prouder of his ability to earn his living with his hands than of any intellectual achievements.

The designation he preferred next to that of workman was teacher. For two years he was the principal of the Northeast

Grammar School in Philadelphia, and, for the next two of the Hartford Public High School.

In an article<sup>1</sup> entitled "A Remarkable Personality," W. S. B. Matthews described some of his experiences in the Philadelphia School:

" . . . His one principle was that he 'ought to teach that school as Christ would have taught it.' It was a day of routine memorizing of books, an ignoring of principles, and of vigorous corporal punishments. Naturally, the latter seemed widest of all from what Christ would have had.

" 'To give you an idea of the discipline of that school,' he [Beecher] said, 'One day I asked a boy, "Brown, shut the door, please?"' Brown answered, "See you in Hell first!"'

" 'In that case,' answered Beecher sweetly, "I will shut it myself,"' and so he did. This went on for several weeks, the order getting worse and worse, until one day it was so bad and so little seemed to have been gained that some insolence from one of the large boys entirely broke him down, and he put his head down upon his arms on his desk and sobbed aloud like a baby with discouragement and grief. 'Then,' he said, 'I prayed; and my prayer was little more than that of the shipwrecked sailor who said, 'Oh Lord, if there be a Lord, now is the time to put in your oar.'

" 'A few days later there was a sensation in the spelling-lesson. It was that page in Webster's speller, "baker, maker, etc.," and when several had been spelled in the usual perfunctory manner, one boy grasped his head with his hands and rushed into the middle of the room saying, "I see it! I see it!" "Well, Jones, what do you see?" I asked. "Oh, I see," he answered, "e-r, one who" (baker, one who bakes, etc.), and it went through the room, and eventually the school, like an electric shock. From that moment on the school began to learn.'

<sup>1</sup> The *Outlook*, March 10, 1906.

"‘And what of Brown and the discipline?’ I asked.  
‘Oh,’ answered Beecher, ‘there was no need of discipline; the school being anxious to learn disciplined itself.’

“‘And what of Brown?’ I persisted. ‘Brown,’ he answered, ‘got very fond of me and followed me about like a dog, everywhere I would go, thankful if he could only see me and now and then get a word.’ [Beecher’s friend, George Robinson, has told me that, as a matter of fact, he whipped Brown in a “knockdown, dragout fight” before this Utopian condition prevailed. Perhaps he thought Jesus would have done the same had He had Brown to deal with.] ‘When I left Philadelphia for good,’ he went on, ‘it was by boat; Brown was out as far as he could get on a spar which projected beyond the pier, and with a great bandanna handkerchief was alternately waving it to me and wiping his eyes. Brown was a good fellow and he has made a good man.’”

During his vacations throughout his four years of teaching, and for one year thereafter, Thomas studied theology under his father. Finally in 1852, yielding to the paternal pressure, he organized the New England Congregational Church in Williamsburg (now a part of Brooklyn) of which he was pastor for two years. It came to his knowledge that the leading men of his church were engaged in shady business transactions. He told them what he knew and warned them that if they did not mend their ways they would find themselves in prison where, in fact, a number of them did later find themselves. Infuriated, they called a council to dismiss him. The council asked him certain questions which he declined to answer because they were, he thought, prompted by curiosity rather than duty. As he remained obdurate, the council informed him if he did not answer they would refuse him an official dismissal without which he could not obtain another church.

At this he picked up his hat, bade the amazed members of the council good-by, and left the room. As he went out of

the building he met coming in Deacon Robinson, of the First Congregational Church of Elmira, New York, who asked, "Is this the Reverend Thomas K. Beecher?"

"This is Thomas K. Beecher—as to whether I'm reverend or not you'll have to ask those fellows in there," he replied, pointing to the room in which the council was sitting.

Apparently more interested in the young minister than the council, Deacon Robinson asked him then and there whether he would consider a call to the Elmira church. After some conversations Deacon Robinson left for Elmira, leaving the young man to consider and write them his answer.

A little later Beecher wrote:

"Mr. Jervis Langdon and Dear Brethren:

"I promised you a final response on Thursday of this week. Until that day I cannot force matters elsewhere to a conclusion; or can I at that day make a final answer unless I hear yes or no from you to the following questions:

"1.—Although I owe nothing and can borrow unlimitedly yet I HAVE no money. Nor will I ever run in debt, God helping me. Hence, you see, that ere I can live upon your gifts, they must be GIVEN. I ask, therefore, can you and will you pay at the rate of \$1,500 per annum, monthly and in advance? Yes or no.

"2.—Can you and will you make me a gift of \$40 to pay expenses of moving self, library and furniture? Yes or no.

"3.—Do you fully understand that as you make me no promises (I cannot allow you to) so I make you none, except to keep busy and preach for you as truly as I can. You are free—I am free. We must owe nothing but to love one another. In brief do you fully understand that at the end of any month you may request me to leave without hurting my feelings, or I may leave you (of course, giving you my reason) without forfeiting your confidence?

"Do you understand this, yes or no?

"4.—Do you fully remember that I do not think that good can be done by a preacher's preaching? It must be by Christians working that good is done, if at all. Do you remember that MY choice is to work with my hands and do good on a small scale; and I come to you full of doubt as to whether it is possible for any church to be benefited by any services of mine as preacher and teacher?

"Do you remember this, yes or no?

"5.—Do you remember that while in good faith I profess to you that I am sound and evangelic in doctrine, yet I have no ambition to found, or foster or preserve a church as such? My exclusive aim is to help men as individuals to be Christians. No church prosperity dazzles; no church poverty or adversity troubles me.

"Do you remember this, yes or no?

"You can answer these questions by telegraph, by number, yes or no, and as I keep a copy of the substance of this letter, I shall understand. If you can answer all of them Yes I think the way is clear. I am not absolutely positive in the matter, but shall know everything except your reply tomorrow, and if I am not disappointed by you will preach for you on Sunday next.

"Pardon my plain speech. Truth is at the bottom of all enduring love, and if it should prove that God intends to be more gracious to me than I dare expect in these matters of prosperity and give me a home in your hearts and homes for all my life I shall be more thankful than you. For though I speak bold words, yet my heart is very tender and very tired and would fain find rest in just some such place as Elmira.

"I ask these questions not through suspicion—not from cautious bargain-driving, but because in my heart I am aching with the sight of the irregularity, superficiality and easy discontent which marks so many churches.

"As a CHURCH, I can do nothing for you; as individuals, I can love and work for you as long as you will let me, and I am not without hope that SOME how, good may be done in Elmira, even though my work in the pulpit soon wearies you and comes to an end.

"I have mislaid the letter you sent me and cannot recall the address of the chairman of your committee, but Christians never stand upon ceremony and you will pardon that I send to J. M. Robinson, whose 'Miltonian' name holds fast in my memory while others fade. Address your dispatch T. K. B., Independent Office, No. 22 Beekman Street, New York, and inclose the \$40 above mentioned so that I can send it back to New York the moment I reach Elmira.

"Yours truly,

"THOMAS K. BEECHER.

"New York, Sept. 18, 1854."

This letter, unusual enough in itself, is more so when one realizes that it was written by an obscure and penniless thirty-year-old minister who had just been dismissed from his church under circumstances such as to make it excessively difficult, if not indeed impossible, to obtain another. Also he was at the time stricken by an appalling grief—his idolized young wife, Olivia Day, the daughter of President Day of Yale, whom he had married only a year before, had just died.

The next Sunday morning, amid the expectant hush of curiosity that always precedes the arrival of a new minister, there strode up the center aisle of the First Congregational Church of Elmira, a tall, slender, handsome young man who, tossing a felt vizor cap onto a chair, mounted the pulpit and opened the services. The tossing of that cap was an unconscious challenge to the traditionalists of the town which they were quick to accept.

There probably was not in the entire country a church better suited to this uncompromising young outcast preacher than this little struggling Elmira congregation. A group of forty-nine seceders from one of the Presbyterian churches of the town had founded this church eight years before as a revolt against the minister's pro-slavery preaching. Among its principles of organization were:

"Freedom of opinion and liberty of speech, shall be guaranteed to every member of this church, subject to such restraints only, as are, in the judgment of the church, imposed by the word of God.

"The unfermented juice of the grape shall be used at the Lord's Supper. No intoxicating liquors shall be used by the members, as articles of drink or traffic. And no person shall be admitted to the church, or allowed to remain in it, who practices or approves of buying or selling human beings, or holding them in slavery. Nor will our members be allowed to attend theatres, balls, or dancing parties, without subjecting themselves to the censure of the church."

Beecher said many years later that his early sermons in Elmira were sometimes an hour or even an hour and a half long because, "I intended to stay just a year and wanted in that year to tell my whole message. . . . It was this little group of radical come-outers that saved me from misanthropy. . . . When bruised, broken, and despairing of men entirely I prayed and they prayed with me, we came into unity and into declared love and peace based on God."

One of his early acts in Elmira was to revive the moribund Ministerial Union of the town, an organization made up of the ministers of the various churches which met on Mondays to read and discuss sermons and preaching. He early shocked this little group by his unclerical habits. He preached no doctrine, but merely the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man, and the duty of every Christian literally to accept and follow the teachings of Christ. Just as he tried to teach his school in Philadelphia as Christ would have taught it, so he tried to conduct his church in Elmira as Christ would have conducted it. He scandalized his ministerial brethren by occasionally stepping into a saloon, kept by an eminently respectable German-American, and drinking a glass of beer. He even had his own beer mug. He would never treat any one,

however, or allow any one to treat him. The American habit of treating was, he said, one of the principal causes of drunkenness. As will be mentioned, he later changed his views on the question of drinking. Some of his fellow-ministers preached against their beer-drinking colleague. He joined a whist club where he occasionally played a hand of whist. That added to his offending in the eyes of his associates. He played baseball on a team known as the "Lively Turtles." Cricket he also played and ten-pins; also the organ, and he sang college songs. All wholesome pleasures, he believed, were helpful rather than harmful. He engaged two rooms in a down-town block and announced from his pulpit that he would there see at certain hours whoever wished to call. In one of his early services he had said to his congregation: "I cannot make pastoral calls. I am not constructed so that I can. But I am yours all times of the day and night when you want anything of me. If you are sick and need a watcher I will watch with you. If you are poor and need someone to saw wood for you, I will saw wood for you. I can read the paper for you if you need anybody to do that. I am yours, but you must call on me the same as you would on a physician." This idea of having an office down-town was denounced by his fellow-ministers as an unhallowed proceeding. Later on most of them did the same.

Beecher made matters worse by securing additional rooms in which the women's sewing circle met and where church suppers were held. And worst of all, he set up here a billiard and pool table where he played pool with boys of the church after securing their promise never to play except when he was present. Perhaps this kept the boys away from the public poolrooms, but that was no excuse to his fellow-ministers. He also opened in these rooms the town's first free public library with books from his own library and those of some of his parishioners.

In 1857 he married Julia Jones, the closest friend of his first wife, Olivia Day, and a granddaughter of Noah Webster. "We were made one," he said, "first in love of Livy, and then in grief for her." Olivia had described her husband a few years before in a letter to Julia: "He is very much in earnest about life. I find him kind and thoughtful . . . but I know he does say hateful things, does do rude things, amazing, unaccountable, unexpected things, and he is sometimes inconsistent and self-contradictory. But I do not think he has it as much on his mind that he must always appear consistent, must never appear to contradict himself, as most of us do. He gives himself strongly to the mood of the moment, seeing things so vividly from one point of view, and then from another, and giving utterance to his thoughts freely and impetuously; besides I look upon all this as the necessary attendant on the working out of so strong and varied a character." No young woman ever had fuller information about the man she was marrying than Julia Jones. Inappropriately enough, it would seem, Thomas K. Beecher took his bride to live, where he had been living, at the water cure on East Hill, conducted by Dr. and Mrs. Silas Gleason. He had gone there himself not because he needed the cure, but because he was fond of the Gleasons. Here they lived for three years until Mrs. Gleason, having persuaded Mr. Beecher that it was not suitable that a healthy young woman should live indefinitely among sick people, they built an attractive cottage across the road commanding a far-reaching view of the town below, where they lived for the rest of their lives, and where their adopted daughter, Julia Beecher Farrar, and her sister, still live. The assessors exempted this cottage from taxation as the home of a clergyman. "Even though a clergyman," Beecher protested, "I'm a self-respecting citizen and insist upon paying my share of the city's expenses."

Professor and Mrs. Charles Samuel Farrar, of Elmira Col-

lege, came to be among the Beechers' most intimate friends. Beecher founded with the professor a local Academy of Science which corresponded with the British Royal Academy, with Tyndall, Darwin and other great scientists. When Professor and Mrs. Farrar died leaving four daughters, the Beechers took two of them into their home as they had already taken all of them into their hearts. One of the two was a cripple and to her they entrusted the expenditure of the house money so that she might feel useful.

Thomas K. Beecher's one luxury was a plunge bath in his basement where on winter mornings before breakfast he would first break the ice with a boat hook and then in he would dive.

Mrs. Beecher was a woman of dynamic energy who threw herself vibrantly into her husband's work. When William Walter Phelps, later American Ambassador to Germany, was once having Sunday evening supper with the Beechers, he remarked, "Mrs. Beecher, I like to watch you pour coffee; you do it with such indiscriminate fury!" When people asked Beecher how he was, he sometimes replied that he was as well as a man could be who was hitched to a steam engine. They were alike in their disregard of convention. Mrs. Beecher was an amateur sculptor of achievement, and had a keen and true eye for beauty. To the consternation of her conventional friends, on entering a room for the first time, she would say to her hosts, "Why do you have all those little pictures on that wall? It's too broken up. It would be better to put this larger one there."

Mrs. Beecher wrote her mother she had devised this little catechism to dispel the spirit of gloom which so causelessly descended upon her husband's head from time to time:

"Q. 'What have the people done for Tom?'

"A. 'Given him a house and lot—or given him \$50 (or whatever the last kindness may have been).'

"Q. 'What ought Tom to be?'

"A. 'Grateful.'

"Q. 'What ought Tom never to be?'

"A. 'Blue.'

She added, "It almost always brings him around."

## CHAPTER XXV

### THOMAS K. BEECHER

#### BUILDING THE FIRST PEOPLE'S CHURCH

THOMAS K. BEECHER served his church for eight years. Then, in 1862, at the age of thirty-eight, he joined the Army of the Potomac under General McClellan, as chaplain of the 141st New York Volunteers, the regiment of which his brother, James, was lieutenant-colonel.

He had never been installed as the pastor of the church but had merely stayed on, on the month-to-month basis which he had insisted upon in his letter of acceptance. The church was anxious to install him as their permanent minister and then grant him a leave of absence. The church records read, "Mr. Beecher having considered the matter of being installed as pastor of the Church, decided not to accept, preferring to remain simply as teacher." He continued to serve his church on a month-to-month basis for the remainder of his life—his insistently uncertain tenure of the office lasted for almost half a century.

His chaplaincy concluded four months later in perhaps the most important and certainly the most dramatic episode of his life. He became convinced that copperheads and disloyal Democrats in McClellan's army near Washington were plotting to seize Lincoln and his Cabinet and place General McClellan as dictator in charge of the Federal Government. Securing an appointment with President Lincoln, whom he had known in Illinois before he became famous, he laid before him his apprehensions with the supporting data he had collected. An army officer, who was in Beecher's confidence, reported that the government at once took drastic steps and crushed this con-

spiracy. Beecher would never allow this episode to be made public because it would, he feared, bring disgrace upon some of his fellow-officers and unnecessary humiliation and pain to their relatives and friends. Now that he and those who might be injured by the disclosure are gone there is no reason for further concealment. On the contrary, it should be known that Thomas K. Beecher, in her darkest hour, rendered this service to his country.

A half-dozen years after Beecher returned to his church from this brief experience with the army, an opera-house was built in Elmira. The auditorium of his church had become inadequate to hold those who wished to attend his Sunday evening meetings. It occurred to him that it would be a good idea to hold these meetings in the larger auditorium of the opera-house and to invite his fellow-clergymen to join him in conducting them. He persuaded some of the rich men of his church to take a financial interest in the new building on condition it might be used Sunday evenings at a moderate rental for church services. The idea of religious services in an opera-house and that their beer-drinking, card-playing colleague by preaching in an opera-house was still further to dishonor his sacred calling scandalized the members of the Ministerial Union! Indignantly they refused to have anything to do with his unhallowed meetings. Instead they denounced him from their pulpits and warned their congregations to stay away from them. When feeling was running high Beecher met on the street a member of the Union who told him a foul story which he had heard about him. Beecher rapped out, "Brother S., your ears are sewers through which pour all the filth of the city!" In spite of these warnings Beecher's meetings grew more and more popular until they crowded even the opera-house. But despite their popularity, Beecher offered to discontinue the services if the other ministers could give good reasons why he should. They gave no reasons, but they expelled Beecher from their Union. He then demanded that

they state their accusations against him, and give him an opportunity to answer them. Until they did so he would continue, he added, to attend as usual the meetings of the Union. They made no accusations, but to prevent his attending meetings they held them in secret. Evidently they expected him to denounce them from his pulpit or in the press. He told no one even privately what they had done and continued to treat the individual members in his usual frank and friendly way. This behavior was upsetting. A religious paper finally carried an obscure notice of Thomas K. Beecher's expulsion from the Union. The Union must have furnished the item—certainly Beecher did not.

When Samuel Clemens (Mark Twain) read this bit of news, he poured forth his scorn in an article in the *Elmira Advertiser* signed "S'cat." ". . . Happy, happy world that knows at last that a little congress of congregationless clergymen, of whom it had never heard before, have crushed a famous Beecher and reduced his audiences from fifteen hundred down to fourteen hundred and seventy-five at one fell blow!"

Mark Twain had married in 1870 Jervis Langdon's daughter, Olivia, and Thomas K. Beecher had performed the ceremony. Jervis Langdon was a rich man, a leading citizen of Elmira and a member of Beecher's church. He had said to Beecher, "My purse is always open to you. You can do more good with it than I can." The Langdon home was Beecher's second home. From time to time Beecher would borrow ten dollars from Langdon just before his Sunday morning sermon. After the services he would return the money. When this had happened several times Langdon inquired, "What's the idea? Why do you borrow ten dollars before preaching merely to return it afterward?" "I feel more spunky with money in my pocket!" explained Beecher.

Mrs. Langdon, the sister-in-law of Mrs. Samuel Clemens, told the writer that Beecher used to dine with neighbors of

theirs every Thursday evening before meeting his Sunday-School teachers. Occasionally he would send the Langdons this message, "Boiled dinner around the corner this evening so will eat with you." How he got his advance information of these impending boiled dinners remains a mystery.

Not long after his expulsion from the Ministerial Union Thomas K. Beecher confirmed the feeling of that respectable body that they had rid themselves of a dangerous member by holding his regular Sunday morning services during the warm months in the open-air amid the trees, shrubs and flowers of Eldridge Park on the outskirts of the city. He not only preached in these beautiful but unsanctified surroundings but actually helped the street railway company to get special permission to run their cars to the Park on Sundays in violation of the Sunday law. And to add to his offending he wore a white duck suit and a white felt hat. He didn't even look like a minister! This provoked his fellow-ministers to further denunciations. Meantime the open-air services drew greater and greater throngs just as had those in the opera-house.

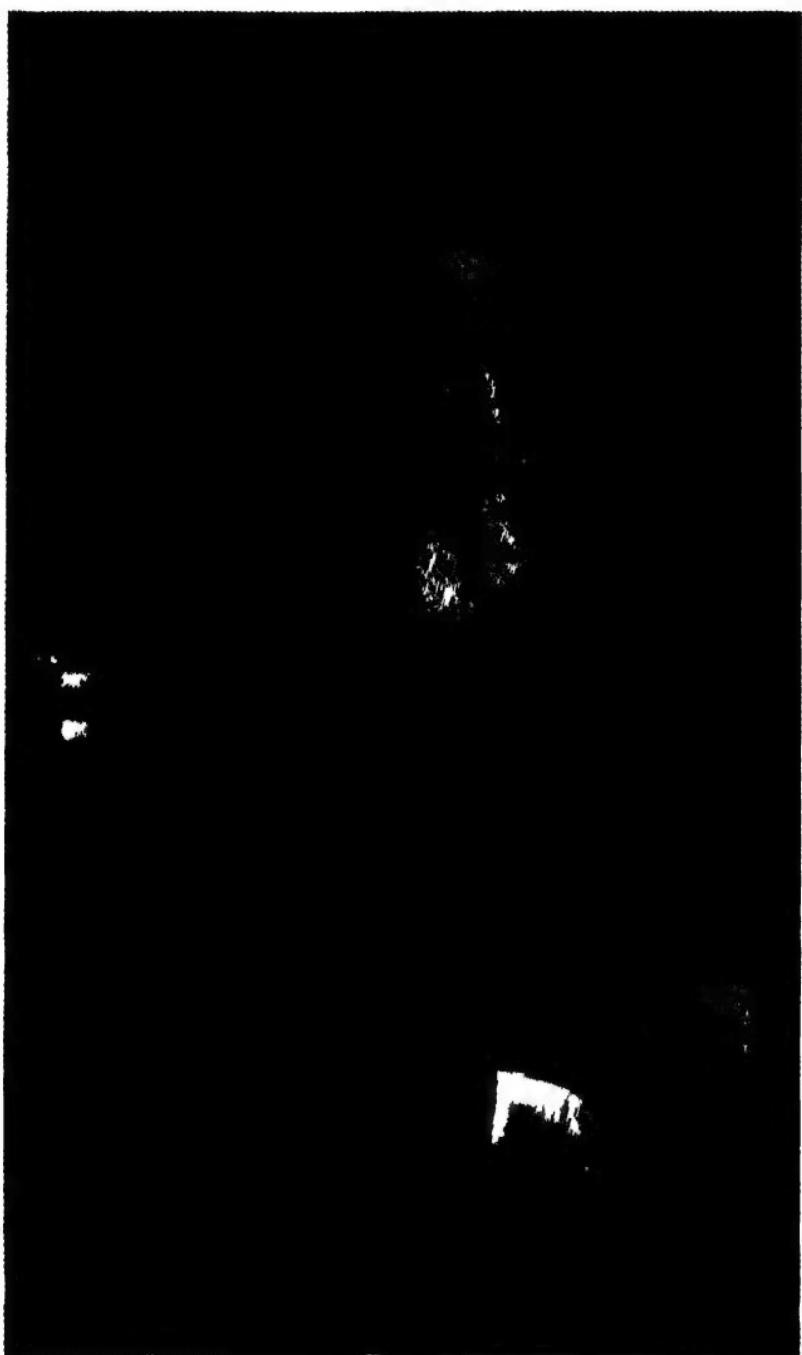
In 1873 Mark Twain wrote another newspaper story about Thomas K. Beecher entitled "A New Beecher Church," in which he makes Beecher say:

"When I came to Elmira, the First Congregational Church was perhaps the worst church building in Elmira. That was 20 years ago. I think the building has held its own ever since. I do not think it will fall down for some time yet, although there is an apparent weakness in the roof over yonder, which I will have Brother Jones look at tomorrow and see whether it is still safe.

"Several times since I have been here the question of a new church has been advocated. I have always opposed the idea, because I knew that you were not ready. I did not wish you to get subscription on the brain, and run races to see who should put down the largest sum; nor was I willing to leave a part of the cost on mortgage.



Thomas H. Beecher (1824-1900).



Thomas K. Beecher in Elmira, New York, in the Eighteen-Nineties.

"Whenever there is a mortgage on a church, the devil holds the mortgage, and the religious life in that church inevitably dies. A new church is not necessary to me. I can preach in the park in the warm weather and in a hall in winter; or I can do as the Lord himself did—preach from house to house. What I am here for is the life of religion in your souls, and preaching is but a minor question.

"Still, there are advantages in a suitable building. I have been talking with an architect, and I find that it is likely to cost about \$50,000 to build such a church as I think we ought to have, if we have a new one. Therefore I am going to put it to you this morning to vote. On the table in front of the pulpit is a box of envelopes directed to me, and in each envelope is a card with blanks. Write your name and address. Then vote on the questions: First, Do we need a new church, and are you in favor of building it now? Yes or no. Second, How much will you give in one payment toward it? Third, How much could you give in three payments toward it?

"Take plenty of time to think it over, and return the envelopes to me within five weeks from yesterday. I will open them five weeks from today. If the majority decides to have a new church and the amount pledged is sufficient, we will have one. Do not tell any one how you mean to vote; do not talk it over with any one except your wife. What I want is a vote of individuals."

The vote was practically unanimous for a new church and the pledges amounted to sixty-five thousand dollars. Since the Langdon family had agreed to match dollar for dollar whatever was pledged, the large sum of one hundred and thirty thousand dollars was available, or eighty thousand dollars more than Beecher had estimated as necessary. This enabled him not only to build an adequate church building but to carry out his ideal of what a "Church Home," as he called it, should be. In three lectures he set forth his ideals for the Church Home.

"We intend to love regardless of return," he said in the first, "and to do good, hoping for nothing; a clear, sheer, truthful, gospel investment. Gospel sermons are plenty. Gospel investments are scarce. You have heard gospel sermons for eighteen years. Now we propose to act a gospel sermon."

"In short, we want a family on a large scale," he said in defining the Church Home, "in which the smallest member will be the noisiest, and make the most trouble, and in which the strongest member will be the stillest and laugh at the little fool and love him, notwithstanding his noise and nonsense."

He drew the original rough plans for the church himself and supervised in every detail the construction of the great building which stands on the rear of Wisner Park, and is in length almost the width of the Park or the length of a city block. The building was started in 1873 but was not completed until 1875 when Thomas K. Beecher was fifty-one.

When his brother, Henry Ward, saw this church for the first time he remarked, "Tom, when I go, I shall leave behind me no such great monument to my life's work."

The building contained, besides the usual facilities of a church, a gymnasium, library, theater, and a "romp-room" for the children in the daytime which served as a dancing-room for the young people in the evening. There were also rooms in which the poorer members could entertain their friends without cost except for refreshments. The unhallowed pool and billiard table was set up in the basement.

The rules of the church against drinking and dancing had by this time become a dead letter, but Thomas K. Beecher never paid the slightest attention to them even when they were in effect. And for his disregard of them there is no indication that he was ever adversely criticized either by the church or by individual members. *The criticism all came from outside.*

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This so-called church with its ungodly facilities for plays, dances and pool was denounced by the ministers of the town. Thomas K. Beecher was berated for establishing probably the first institutional church in this country. He lived to see his type of church spread through the land and his denouncing fellow-ministers or their successors build similarly equipped churches in Elmira itself. Institutional churches had for decades a great and increasing vogue until the development of Y. M. C. A.'s, Y. W. C. A.'s, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, boys' clubs, social settlements and almost innumerable like organizations, lessened the need for such facilities within church walls.

By this time Thomas K. Beecher had begun to receive calls to large city churches, some of which asked him to name his own salary. To these he replied that it was his job to do good and not to make money, and that he believed he could do more good where he was than anywhere else.

Once, when particular pressure was brought to bear to get him to go elsewhere and he was considering the matter, his brother, Henry Ward, wrote, "Don't leave the Park Church—they can appreciate you and endure you!"

Reverend Annis Ford Eastman who became his associate said of this comment:

"And it is to the glory of this church that this was true. A teacher sent from God is bound to make trouble when he comes. He who denies all human authority over his conscience, who fearlessly examines all religious systems and social conventions, taking what is good for him and rejecting what is bad, who is never moved out of his way by popular enthusiasms—who can see both sides of every question, and bravely state them—he must often be a sore trial to the average sense of propriety in a community."

So this workman, teacher and preacher built up in a town which grew, between the time he came in 1854 until his death

in 1900, from eight thousand to thirty-eight thousand inhabitants, a church with not only this large and unique plant but with a membership which increased from fifty to seven hundred, with a Sunday-School which came to number one thousand members of all ages from small children to their grandparents. The Sunday congregations of between thirteen hundred and fifteen hundred were made up not only of all denominations but of the unchurched and even agnostics. Traveling salesmen so routed their trips that they might be in Elmira over Sunday to hear Thomas K. Beecher preach.

How did he do it? Thomas K. Beecher was no orator like his brother, Henry Ward. His creed was simplicity itself. He taught the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man and salvation and the Heavenly reward through a literal acceptance of the teachings of Jesus and the endeavor to live as He lived. He decided every question as he thought Jesus would have decided it.

There was a poor Irish woman in Elmira whose husband had been killed on a railroad. She was struggling to feed and clothe her five children and keep up the payments on the mortgage on her little house. Beecher called one day and handed her the mortgage deed paid in full, saying some friends had furnished the money. "And here is some money from the same friends with which to buy what you need for the children," he added. When her tears and words began to flow in gratitude, he stopped her, "Don't thank me, it isn't my money. Don't thank those who gave it to me. It isn't their money. It's Jesus Christ's money and that means that it belongs to whoever needs it most. If you come across any who need it more than you, you must give it to them."

He befriended a prostitute, a handsome young woman of exceptional education and cultivation, whom, to the shocked amazement of his neighbors, he finally took into his own home and treated as a daughter. After a few years she married a very reputable man who knew her past and they went to Cali-

fornia to live. It was remarked that no other man in the town could have taken this woman into his home without endangering his own reputation.

W. S. B. Matthews in his article in the *Outlook*, described a talk which Beecher once gave to the students of the theological seminary at Union Park in Chicago:

"After the talk there were questions. One asked whether he thought it advisable to preach Hell, i.e., the eternal destruction of the wicked. Beecher became extremely affected, and seemed likely to burst into tears. He controlled himself, and answered in a voice full of deep feeling that every man must decide this for himself. He, personally, had never felt himself at liberty to preach the doctrine for fear of discouraging a seeking soul. At this, one of those very conscientious young men rose up and asked: 'But Mr. Beecher, would not you have us stand up for the truth?'

"There was a moment of silence for the poser to strike in. Then Beecher, in a quiet voice, but with deep significance, spoke this apothegm:

"Truth is eternal; it is a part of God. If you will give it a chance, the truth will stand up for you.'"

Thomas K. Beecher was a large man, almost six feet tall and broad-shouldered. He usually dressed shabbily and wore a curious visor-shaped cap which Mrs. Theodore Crane, a sister of Mrs. Samuel Clemens, made for him after he had shown her how. There were many successors, identical in appearance, to that cap which he had tossed upon the chair before his first sermon in Elmira. Members of his church at one time became aroused over his aged and faded butternut coat. They felt it reflected upon the church to have their minister wear such a disreputable garment. Jervis Langdon agreed to see what he could do. So he took Beecher to his tailor and had him fitted for a handsome suit of broadcloth. Some weeks later he found him again at large in the worn discredited

coat. When asked where the new one was, Beecher explained shamefacedly that he had given it to a poor fellow who had no coat and was cold. "You see I couldn't give him the old coat because it wasn't fit to give to any one so I had to give him the new one," he added apologetically.

He rode a tricycle which he was in the habit of leaving unlocked in a tough district at the foot of East Hill, but it was never molested. When walking he occasionally skipped as an expression of his ebullition of spirits. These moods of elation were, as with his grandfather, David Beecher, interspersed with periods of intense gloom. Once when Mrs. Appleton R. Hillyer, the daughter of Dr. Horace Bushnell, of whom Beecher was a devoted admirer, was visiting in his house, she commented, "Mr. Beecher, does it not seem inconsistent with your professions as a Christian to give way to these moods of depression?" In his abrupt way he replied, "Not at all! If I weren't a Christian, wickedness wouldn't distress and oppress me as it does." The assistant librarian of his church library once found him sitting alone with his head bowed forward despairingly on his hands. Hearing the librarian approach, he said, looking up, "Perhaps after I'm gone, Nafe, they'll understand what I mean."

In his latter days he came to be known as "Father Tom." He and his close friend, Father Tom Cunningham, a Catholic priest, were often referred to as the two Father Toms.

He discovered at one time that a group of his parishioners were raising a considerable sum of money the income of which was to protect him against want in his old age. He told the leaders of this benevolent conspiracy they must stop their efforts at once and return to the givers every dollar they had received. "It has been one of my lifelong ambitions to be a worthy object of charity in my old age, and I don't propose to be thwarted!" he insisted.

He served his city in various public capacities. He was commissioner of bridges for a year. Presumably, the town

never had a bridge commissioner who knew so much about bridge construction. He served a short term as superintendent of schools. He ran for various elective offices on the Republican, Democratic, Greenback and Prohibition tickets. He held it the duty of every good citizen to run for office when any considerable group of his fellow-citizens wanted him to, regardless of whether there was any chance of his election. He always insured his own defeat by denouncing the conduct of his own party whenever he felt it merited it. His most constant public service was in the humble capacity of regulator of the town clock. This clock was facetiously known as the "Tom clock." Once when lecturing in Buffalo, with the intention of spending the night there, he remembered he had forgotten to wind the clock. Canceling his further engagements, he took the next train home. He took his time from a sundial in his yard and so accurate was the clock that the railroads used it. The time was referred to as "Beecher's time." He knew the engineers and other trainmen, who made Elmira on their runs, and those he didn't know knew him. Seldom did he take a rail journey without going into the cab and running the engine. All engineers willingly turned over the throttle to him because they knew he understood engines.

Thomas K. Beecher was devoted to children and they to him. When the writer was a small boy he visited our home. He told me he had a very large horse and had been looking for a very small boy to take care of him so that the average size of horse and boy might be about right. As I was the smallest boy he knew he would like to offer me the job if my parents could spare me. With the literalness of childhood I rushed to my mother to get permission to accept. When I found it was all a joke, he told me many thrilling Bible stories to compensate me for the disappointment.

Dr. Arthur Booth, of Elmira, was one of his boys, as he called them, and has told me something of his handling of the group of a dozen boys he gathered round him. He met

with these high-school boys once a week in his study at the church. Through arousing their mental curiosity and stimulating their powers of observation he sought to train them to be leaders. He sent them to inspect bridges, engines and houses, and report back what principles of construction they had discovered. As a great privilege he allowed them to help him take care of the town clock. They also discussed what is meant by right and wrong and what by beauty. They made a collection of copies of Greek statues. They also read, and discussed what they read. They read Nicolay and Hay's *Life of Lincoln*, as it appeared serially in the *Century Magazine*, and Beecher supplemented the articles by describing Lincoln as he had known him in Illinois as a young lawyer. He once said with a smile, "Abraham Lincoln wasn't considered good enough to associate with a Beecher in those days, but I took a chance, and it didn't hurt me." Every one of his "boys" became a successful and useful man.

Doctor Booth believes it was Thomas K. Beecher's ambition, after he returned from the Civil War, to become president of Cornell University so he might apply on a large scale these principles of education, based upon observation and aroused curiosity, which he applied on a small scale with his group of boys. However that may be, there can be no doubt he regarded himself as more a teacher than a preacher—in fact, he always referred to himself as the teacher of his church.

Unlike his father and most of his brothers and sisters, Thomas K. Beecher wrote no books. Aside from a slender volume of children's stories called *In Tune with the Stars*, nothing of his ever appeared between stiff covers except two collections of sermons. For the publication of none of these volumes was he responsible. For many years, however, he wrote weekly for the *Elmira Advertiser* what he called "Saturday Miscellany," thus becoming what is called to-day a columnist. He wrote lay sermons and his reactions to public questions whether political, scientific, educational, cultural or

philosophical. His ideas were original and robustly presented, if not always defensible. In an 1880 issue of the paper he opened his column with these words:

"*The Advertiser* kindly renews the diploma received by us years ago from its 'veteran editor' as a first-class fool in politics. Proud of the degree, we copy the renewal of it.

" 'A Political Mole—Our good friend, Mr. Beecher, editor of the *Saturday Miscellany*, is nothing in politics if he is not absolutely ridiculous, and he therefore gives utterance to the following:—

" " ". . . And now will the *Advertiser* answer our last week's question: 'Why is it dishonorable for a candidate to sell a vote for two thousand dollars, and yet wholly virtuous to take an office as pay for the same vote?'"

" 'Another question: "Where did the money come from that paid the enormous costs of the late Grant and Blaine booms? Who are the men that advanced the cash? In what manner did they expect to get their money back?"'"

Even though ridiculous, such questions must have been embarrassing to the stalwart leaders of the Grand Old Party.

In *Our Seven Churches*, one of his volumes of sermons, he gave something of the history and particular contribution to Christianity of each of the seven denominations represented in Elmira including the Roman Catholic Church. Of Roman Catholics he said it was unreasonable for members of other communions to expect them to be tolerant because tolerance was contrary to their beliefs and discipline, and that that fact made it all the more essential that others should be tolerant toward them. He concluded with his own conception of a Church of Christ which should embrace members of all denominations as well as all good and true people whether or not they belonged to a church.

One day a young man asked him the best way to reach Heaven, meaning by what church. "My boy, you can go to New York from Elmira," he replied, "by the Erie, the Lehigh Valley, the Lackawanna or the Northern Central, you can walk, ride horseback or you can go by boat. One way may be somewhat more roundabout than the other, but you will get there all right if you follow the sign posts. You can reach Heaven by the Catholic Church, or by the Synagogue, Universalist or Baptist Church, and you can even reach it through the Park Church—but, whatsoever you do, do it unto the Lord."

These were two of the striking expressions in a sermon called, "My Brother Henry," which he preached in 1887, the Sunday following his brother's death: "In those sad days when his good name was besmirched, and thousands of men took sides, brother Henry—my brother Henry—solemnly as-serverated his innocence and his purity. Knowing him, I believed him and read no further. . . . He cared as little for logic and consistency as an apple-tree that blossoms bountifully in the sunshine to the song of robins and blue-birds."

A few years before when Thomas K. preached for his brother at Plymouth Church, many curiosity-seekers, as usual, came to the church merely to see and hear Henry Ward Beecher. As soon as Thomas K. Beecher arose in the pulpit, those sightseers started for the doors. At this Thomas K., raising his hand for attention, announced, "All those who came here this morning to worship Henry Ward Beecher may now withdraw from the church—all who came to worship God may remain."<sup>1</sup> It was not pleasant for so dominant a personality as Thomas K. Beecher to be overshadowed. In fact, he once remarked, "Being a son of Lyman Beecher and a brother of Henry Ward Beecher has been the greatest misfortune in my career."

<sup>1</sup>This was told me by Thomas K. Beecher's friend, William F. Seward.

The sermon which has the most pertinence to-day is that on "Prohibition"—preached in 1886 when he was sixty-one. Thomas K. Beecher's occasional glasses of beer not only did him no harm, he believed, but even did him good. Therefore he allowed himself this pleasure—wholesome pastimes were desirable for a clergyman as for any one else. After long years of observation of the effects of drink, however, he decided the number of persons who could use it in such moderation as to have it harmless, or even beneficial, were so negligible, while its injurious effects upon the great majority were so obvious, as to call for prohibition for the greatest good of the greatest number. He summarized his position in these words: "For the purifying of our political methods, for the education of our young men, for the betterment of our legislation, for the diminution of crime, for the protection of families, all of them threatened by this subtle, fascinating agent which few men are able to use with benefit, and most men find a curse and a destroyer—I am ready to stand forward with my fellow-citizens of agreeing mind and temper, and demand that this public enemy shall be declared contraband in time of peace, and beyond the pale of legal protection." Earlier he said that since regulation among the English-speaking peoples had been for three centuries a disastrous failure, it was time to try prohibition.

He took texts or topics for sermons from homely incidents of every-day life as well as from Biblical and other literature. One hot June day as he was coming down East Hill he found a boy selling lemonade. He drank a glass and asked the price. It was three cents and he paid him. Farther down the hill he came across another boy selling lemonade and took another glass. When he handed this boy three cents, he protested the price was five. "How do you expect to compete with your rival up the hill who is selling his for three cents?" inquired Beecher. "Oh, but a puppy fell into his!" retorted the boy. Taking this episode as his springboard, Beecher preached the

next evening on "Beware of the Bargains of Life." He said that in almost every case when you find what appears to be a bargain, if you investigate, you will find a puppy has fallen into it!

Although Thomas K. Beecher lived until 1900, the infirmities of age made him relatively inactive after 1894 when the Reverend Samuel E. Eastman and his wife, the Reverend Annis Ford Eastman, became joint associate pastors of his church; and he, in effect if not in name, pastor-emeritus.

He died on March 14, 1900. His city went into mourning for him, and when his body lay in state in his church for two days an almost unbroken line of people passed the coffin for a last look—a line of old and young, rich and poor, the churched and unchurched, believers and agnostics, the respectable and the disreputable. All kinds of human beings were for the moment linked by their common grief. His fellow-ministers, the successors of those who had expelled him from the Ministerial Union, organized a huge memorial meeting in which they vied with one another in paying tributes to their once denounced associate. A Jewish rabbi said at this meeting that he had always regarded himself as one of Thomas K. Beecher's assistants.

At once there arose a movement, initiated in the schools, to erect the statue of him which now stands in the Park in front of his church. The same heterogeneous mass of humanity which paid a last tribute to his body contributed toward the statue. Gifts which represented the most sacrifice on the part of the givers were quarters, dimes and even nickels.

In one of his last sermons he told his people that he would not be visible to them much longer, that he was going into "the other room," but his spirit would remain with them and share their joys and sorrows, just as he himself had for almost half a century.

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At the commemoration in 1924 of the one hundredth anniversary of Thomas K. Beecher's birth, the Secretary of the Y. M. C. A. said, "I regret never to have seen Mr. Beecher. He died before I knew Elmira, but I have found him the most alive man in the town."

## CHAPTER XXVI

### JAMES BEECHER: 1828-1886

#### THE SAILOR AND SOLDIER

"OH, I shall be a minister. That's my fate. Father will pray me into it!"<sup>1</sup> said the gay young sailor, James Beecher, just after landing from a voyage to China as an officer of one of the fastest clipper ships of the day. Well he knew that while he could get away from his father by sailing the seven seas, he couldn't get away from his father's prayers.

James Chaplin Beecher, born in Boston in 1828, was the last of Lyman Beecher's thirteen children. Entering Dartmouth College at sixteen, he soon began to show a characteristic Beecher lack of respect for the regular curriculum. He had ideas of his own as to what he wanted to study. That brought him into conflict with rules and regulations and the regulators until, finally, the young man with too many ideas was suspended for a period of chastening reflection. When asked by an anxious relative why he was sent home, he replied, "To give my class a chance to catch up with me." After being allowed to return to college, young James conformed sufficiently to graduate honorably with the class of 1848.

Then he went to sea and for five years he was in the East India trade, shipping first as a common sailor and later as an officer on the fastest and the most beautiful sailing ships which ever sailed the seas. But in 'fifty-three those resistless prayers of his old father were answered and the wild young sailor came dutifully ashore and subjected himself to the discipline of the Andover Theological Seminary. Before he had finished

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<sup>1</sup> From an anonymous privately printed sketch of James Beecher's life.

his course, he was called to take charge of the Seamen's Bethel at Hong Kong, China. With his experience, this was just the place for him so he was hurriedly ordained as a minister, and set sail again for China.

During his life in China, a small ship on which he was making one of his missionary journeys was cast on the Peata Shoals where the shipwrecked company were attacked by Chinese pirates. Fortunately, one member of the group knew enough Chinese to persuade the pirates that it would be more profitable to hold them for ransom than to cut their throats as they were preparing to do. The ransom was paid by their friends and no one was hurt.

At the outbreak of the Civil War, the young missionary returned to his country and enlisted as the chaplain of the First Long Island Regiment, known as the Brooklyn Phalanx. But that job didn't suit his ardent temperament and strong military aptitude, so he soon got himself transferred to the active service and before long, became the senior captain of the regiment. He was next promoted to be lieutenant-colonel of the 141st New York Volunteers, the regiment of which his brother, Thomas, became for a few months the chaplain. Soon after, he was given the colonelcy of the First North Carolina Colored Volunteers and then he really struck his stride. This regiment he raised, organized, armed and led for three years. He had the job of transforming ignorant, slouching, cringing slaves into alert, self-reliant and obedient soldiers. Most people, even among the sympathetic, thought it couldn't be done. The common feeling was expressed by the prevalent saying of the time, "The nigger won't fight."

The young Colonel believed "the nigger" would fight and, proposing to prove it, he opened in 1863 a recruiting office in Newbern, North Carolina. Since there was no chaplain, he undertook the spiritual as well as the physical care of his men. One Sunday evening the Colonel wrote home:

"Had service at 6 P. M. before dress parade. I formed the battalion into close column by division; then, having no chaplain, gave out, 'My Country, 'tis of thee.' We have some sweet singers among the officers and many of the men sing too. Then I read the 34th Psalm and they seemed to feel its import. 'The Lord is nigh unto all them that are of a broken heart.' 'This poor man cried and the Lord heard him.' Then I prayed with them. I had given no directions but they knelt down and bowed their heads—near seven hundred men in United States uniform. It affected me beyond measure. . . . When I spoke of their past lives—of their having been bought and sold like brutes, of their wives and children not their own, of their sorrow and degradation, many wept like children. . . ."

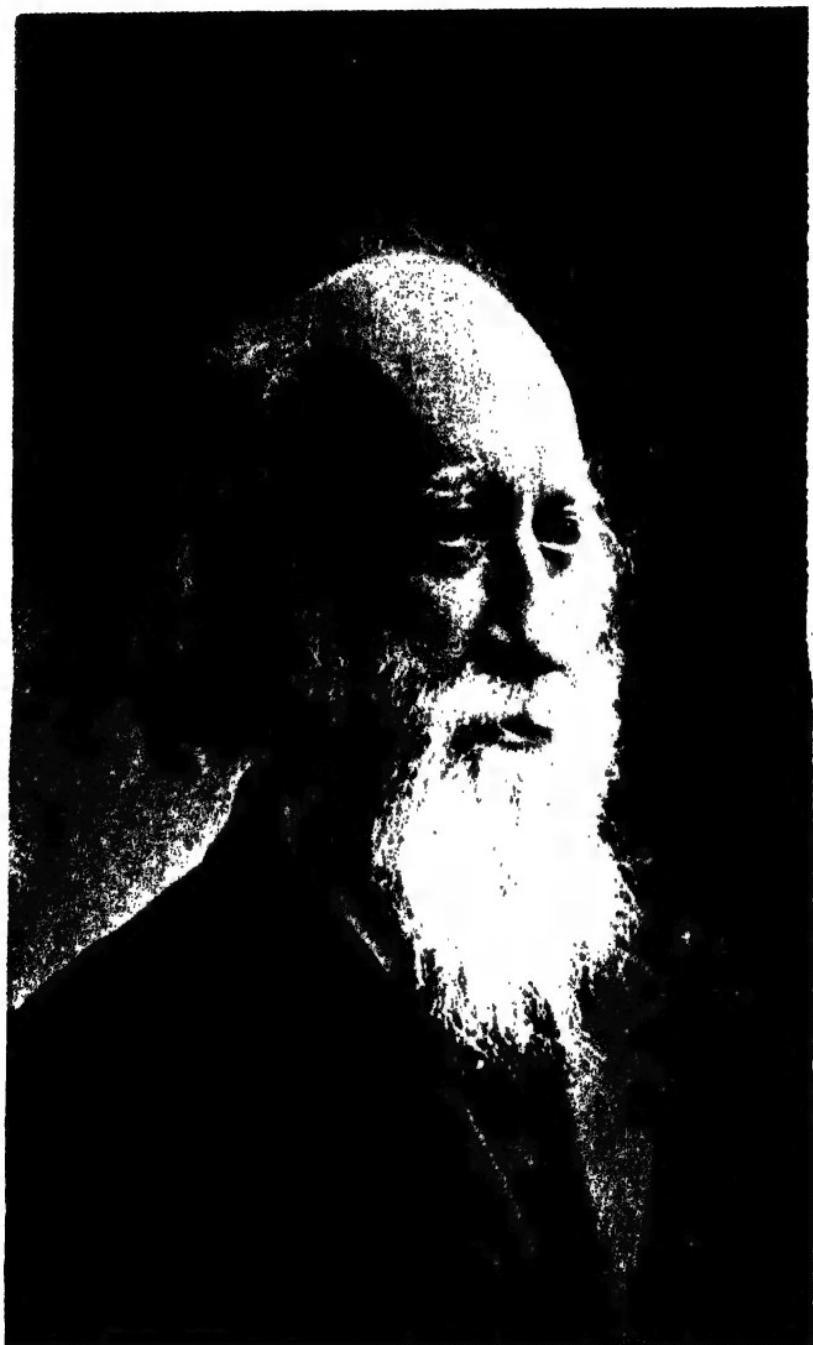
"I am amazed at the promptitude of these men to learn military drill," he wrote later. "I wish doubtful people at home could see my three weeks' regiment. I think we shall make creditable showing in three weeks more and the Government will not grumble at a regiment enlisted, organized, uniformed, armed, equipped and handsomely encamped in six weeks."

When his men first went under fire, Colonel Beecher was in the North arranging for more arms. His regiment was ordered to enter the Battle of Olustee in Florida as a forlorn hope. One of his officers wrote: "Our men were brave beyond description, and as their comrades fell around them, they stood up nobly without once shrinking. When the right arm of our color sergeant was broken, he knelt down and held up the dear old flag with his left until relieved." That helped to scotch the saying, "The nigger won't fight."

The next year when Colonel Beecher at the head of his regiment was trying to break the enemy's line on the Charleston and Savannah Railroad at the Honey Hill engagement, his horse was killed and he was shot through the body and was believed to be fatally wounded. He did recover, although his



James Beecher as soldier and civilian (1828-1886).



Charles Beecher (1815-1900).

serious wound and subsequent hardships were undoubtedly the underlying cause of his ultimate tragic death.

He returned to active service in time to take command of the upper half of Charleston after the fall of that city. His troops occupied the citadel. The first Sunday after his return, the Chaplain-Colonel preached to a huge congregation of freedmen in the largest church in the city.

" . . . He entered the pulpit through a crowd that filled every standing place, in full uniform followed by members of his staff," wrote his friend and surgeon, Doctor Marcy. "He unbuckled his sword, laying it tenderly on the desk, and took for his text, 'The liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free.' His impassioned oratory at times swayed the vast audience as a mighty wind the tree-tops—again, recounting God's care for His children, it fell as the soft dews from Heaven, and there was not a dry eye in the house, and when at the close all bent in prayer, broken sobs and utterances of 'tanks to God, we's free,' attested his power. . . ."

After three months in Charleston, during which his brother, Henry Ward, made his speech at the anniversary of the fall of Fort Sumter, he was given command of a sub-military district covering an area of ninety square miles which comprised two good-sized towns and six hundred rice and cotton plantations. Of his work there a current newspaper account read: ". . . Honest, bold, uncompromising and consistent, with his whole heart in the work of securing equal rights to all men without regard to color, he has brought order out of confusion and obtained the confidence of both the freedmen and their late owners. . . ." At the close of this service Colonel Beecher resigned with the brevet rank of brigadier-general of United States Volunteers.

For the next four years he served as the minister of the Congregational Church in Owego, New York. While there the

mother of a large family in the parish died leaving, as the youngest, twin daughters, three years old. The Beechers became so concerned for these motherless twins that they adopted them. They had no children of their own but already had one adopted daughter. From there he was called to a large church in Poughkeepsie. After preaching successfully for another four years, the family pioneering instinct impelled him to resign and retire to the wilderness. He purchased a tract of land a mile square in the unbroken forests of Ulster County about seventy miles from Poughkeepsie where he preached to the woodsmen for whose neglected children his wife opened a little school.

Ned Buntline, the writer of dime novels, visited him there and said in describing the Beecher retreat:

"His tract of land is densely wooded. . . . A beautiful lake of good size occupies a portion of the property and there is in all the Catskill range no scenery more picturesque, 'Beecher Lake,' the natives call it. . . . and on one of the mountain cliffs commanding a fine view of it the preacher built for himself his home, doing all the work himself. It is a story-and-a-half structure, plain, neat and comfortable. At the time of its erection there was no wagon road within half a dozen miles; the nearest hamlet and post-office was ten miles distant while it was three times that distance to the first railroad station. There all five (Beecher, his wife and adopted daughters) have since remained—there the elder ones are likely to remain as long as life shall last. . . . there is every reason to believe that there is no earthly inducement which could induce James Beecher to enter again on his old-time career. The few neighbors who have gathered about his lake fully appreciate him. 'He is queer,' they admit, but for all that they love him."

Probably Ned Buntline was right in saying that no earthly inducement would have lured James Beecher from his wilder-

ness retreat but when his brother, Henry Ward, urged him to take charge of the Bethel Mission of Plymouth Church in Brooklyn, that seemed something more than an earthly inducement and, coming from Henry Ward, the magnet of the family, it proved irresistible.

So James Beecher exchanged the wilderness of Nature for the man-made wilderness of the slums of Brooklyn. Successful though he was in this work, it proved too exhausting nervously for a man who had been wounded as he had been and who had been through such hardships. At length he showed symptoms of serious mental aberration, broke down completely and had to be placed in a sanitarium. After four years he had apparently sufficiently recovered to be released in the care of a nephew.

Eventually he went to Doctor Gleason's water-cure sanitarium opposite the home of his brother, Thomas K. Beecher, in Elmira, New York. One day he made an excellent score on Doctor Gleason's private shooting range. He was a crack shot. That evening when supper was over he talked with friends for a time on the piazza and then went to his room, placed the muzzle of his gun in his mouth and shot himself. Evidently he did not propose to be a burden to his family. He was buried in Elmira beside his sister Catharine, the sister who was twenty-eight years his senior.

## EPILOGUE

### THE BEECHERS' PART IN THE TRANSITION FROM HEAVEN AND THEOLOGY TO THIS WORLD AND SERVICE

LYMAN BEECHER dominated his seven sons and four daughters throughout their lives, but never inhibited their initiative, suppressed their individuality or shackled their independence. The ideas he held and the causes he espoused they, in turn, held and espoused.

His son, Henry Ward, and his daughter, Harriet, hated slavery and worked for its abolition just as he had.

Catharine inherited her father's interest in education.

His sons, Edward, Henry Ward and Charles, and his daughters, Catharine, Harriet and Isabella, took up their father's partial revolt against Calvin's doctrines and carried it to complete emancipation.

Charles inherited his father's love of music and put into practise his ideas for the improvement of church music.

Thomas, in establishing the first institutional church in America, was merely carrying to its logical conclusion his father's expansion of the work of his Boston church into the civic and social life of the community.

His youngest daughter Isabella's suffrage crusade was the only major work undertaken by any of his children in which he had not preceded them.

Lyman Beecher was a reformer not because of his theology but in spite of it. As his son, Henry Ward, said of him, "He thought he was great by his theology; everybody else knew he was great by his religion." His theology taught him the only way to get into Heaven was by supernatural intervention—conversion—and belief in the right doctrines. That was why

he preached his first sermon in Litchfield against morality. He wanted to scotch on the threshold of his work there any notions that mere goodness could get one into Heaven. At that time all the crimes in the calendar, wicked as they were in themselves, were chiefly reprehensible because they led people to carelessness in their church-going, Bible-reading, hymn-singing, religious observances and beliefs generally.

Lyman Beecher's fights against slavery, dueling, intemperance and other evils were really inconsistent with his theological dogmas. He should have devoted his time to believing the right doctrines and persuading others to believe them, and left secular matters to take care of themselves; or he might, with current theological propriety, have laid them before the Lord in prayer. But Lyman Beecher didn't leave things to the Lord; he attended to them himself and then asked God's blessing on the result. His heart and his common sense were truer guides than his theology.

With his children it was different. They were reformers, not in spite of their convictions, but because of them. Like their father they held that the purpose of existence was so to live this transitory life as to win life eternal. But unlike him, to do right was their religion rather than to believe right. They fought slavery, intemperance, gambling, prostitution and political corruption because such things make it difficult or impossible for people to lead right lives. They were just as eager to save the souls of individuals as was their father, but their beliefs taught them, just as his instincts prompted him, that that was not enough.

They realized it was no use to give a man a Bible and a hymn-book and then leave him amid irresistible temptations. Not only must the individual be saved but the conditions which surround him must be so changed that he can stay saved, and so live here as to win Heaven hereafter.

Lyman Beecher's children were just as sure as he was, that they were God's agents, commissioned by Him to carry out

His will. This conviction gave them their self-assurance and contributed to their driving force. But their God, unlike his, was a social God who concerned Himself not only with the individual soul but with social conditions. But the improving of social conditions was not an end in itself, but merely the means to an end—the end being to get people into Heaven . . . to insure for the greatest possible number of people lives so lived in this world as to win Heaven in the next.

The children of Lyman Beecher helped to build the intellectual bridge between the theologians of the past, who placed the emphasis upon holding the correct doctrines and leaving everything else to God's divine intervention, and the spiritual leaders of the present, who care nothing for doctrines and do not believe in supernatural intervention. They were Christ worshipers. They sought to decide all questions as Christ would have decided them. To live as Christ lived was their ideal. Idealists of to-day, whether or not they believe in a Heaven in the next world, try to create an approximation to Heaven in *this* world. Instead of regarding this world as merely an anteroom to Heaven or Hell, and hence only important as affording the means of winning the one or escaping the other, they hold that it is an end in itself. They affirm that life should be so lived as to make it worth while quite apart from any considerations as to a future life.

While, to be sure, Lyman Beecher's children also regarded this life as an anteroom to the life eternal, they held that it was a probationary period in which the supreme test was love and right living rather than fear and dogma. Lyman Beecher mitigated the austerity of Calvin's God; Henry Ward Beecher and his brothers and sisters transformed Him into a God of love and service. Have we not swung to the opposite extreme from the situation which confronted Lyman Beecher where all the emphasis was on observance and doctrine and none on spirit and conduct? Now one who is a good friend

and neighbor and a generous, useful, public-minded citizen may believe what he likes and never enter a church, sing a hymn or open a Bible. Midway between these extremes stood the Beechers. They paved the way for their successors of to-day further to develop their God of love and service into the ideal which shall spread the dominion of justice and brotherhood until there shall be developed a Heaven on earth.

Thus did the Beechers help to bring to this earth as present realities, instead of other-world contingencies, both the Hell of sinners and the Heaven of saints.

THE END



# APPENDIX



## APPENDIX

### 1.

Soon after their arrival at Quinnipiack, after a day of fasting and prayer, the Colonists drew up what they called a plantation covenant. In this they solemnly pledged themselves that "in matters that concern the gathering and ordering of a church, so also in all public offices which concern civil order, as the choice of magistrates and officers, making and repealing laws, dividing allotments of inheritance, and all things of like nature, they all of them be ordered by the rules which the scripture held forth to them."<sup>1</sup>

Messrs. Davenport and Eaton and their associates entered into a covenant with the Quinnipiack Indians through their sachem, Momauguin, for the purchase of their lands for which they paid them twelve coats of English cloth, twelve alchyme spoons, twelve hatchets, twelve hoes, two dozen of knives, twelve porringers and four cases of French knives and scissors. New Haven was more expensive than the Island of Manhattan! The agreement embodying these terms was signed by John Davenport and Theophilus Eaton for the Colonists while Momauguin and his chiefs made their marks.

The poor Quinnipiack Indians had been almost annihilated by the ruthless and powerful Mohawks and Pequots in the Pequot War. As they had only forty-seven braves left, they were only too eager to secure the protection of these well-armed and well-equipped white men. They called the Reverend Mr. Davenport, "The so-big study man."

The next year, 1639, after a sermon by the Reverend Mr. Davenport from the text, "Wisdom hath builded her house, she hath hewn out her seven pillars," the Colonists drew up and adopted a constitution for their theocracy. "Mr. Davenport declared unto them by the scriptures what kind of persons might be trusted with matters of government. . . ."<sup>2</sup> The constitution provided that church-members only should be free burgesses and only free burgesses should be eligible to hold office or to vote. Messrs. Davenport and Eaton and five of their leading associates were chosen as the seven pillars of the church and this group made up the General Court, the ruling body of the Colony. This Court then elected Theophilus Eaton as governor and the other members as magistrates, marshal and secretary. They also

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<sup>1</sup> *History and Antiquities of New Haven (Conn.). Collected and compiled by J. W. Barber.*

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

ordered that "the word of God should be the only rule for ordering the affairs of government in that commonwealth."<sup>8</sup>

Apparently the word of God proved insufficient for the government of New Haven as three years later, in 1642, the General Court enacted twelve laws relating to capital crimes, and eight years after that a complete code covering all offenses.<sup>4</sup>

In the New Haven Town Records for 1649 to 1662 it is recorded that at a meeting of the General Court: "It is Ordered that the Treasurer paye out of Towne stocke for the making of 5 or 6 rod of fence for Widdow Beecher, ye midwife. . ." Rail and picket fences played a large part in the lives of our Colonial ancestors. They did not for some reason tether their live stock, and, naturally, if allowed to roam abroad at will, they would have destroyed all the gardens. An exception was made of pigs who were privileged characters to whom was granted the freedom of the town. It would seem that the 'Widdow' Beecher's essential industry gave her a kind of quasi-public status which entitled her to have her land fenced at public expense.

The records of a trial show that on the testimony of "Goodwife Beecher, ye midwife" Robt. Meaker and his wife were convicted of "a high breach of the law of God" before their marriage, and were ordered to be whipped and to pay a fine of ten shillings each. Apparently Goodwife Beecher's code of ethics permitted her to reveal information injurious to her patients obtained in the course of her professional duties.

The only further reference to Hannah Beecher states that she and others were "permitted to sitt in ye ally (upon their desire) for convenience of Hearing." This privilege was granted to "Goodwife Beecher, ye elder" and four other goodwives. Isaac having married by this time, Hannah Beecher had become a kind of dowager good-wife, denoted as "ye elder." Whether she and the four other goodwives were given these seats "in ye ally" near the pulpit purely because they were "hard of hearing," or as in some measure a reward of merit or tribute to their standing in the community does not appear. Hannah was evidently beginning to suffer from the infirmities of old age. She died within the year at the advanced age, for the time, of fifty-eight, leaving to Isaac an estate appraised at 55£, 5s, 6d.

Six years before his mother's death it is recorded of "Isaake Beecher" (his name is spelled differently at each mention) that he bought six acres of land from John Vincon and eight acres of the "Widdow Walker." And two years later, in 1655, he purchased from

<sup>8</sup> *History and Antiquities of New Haven (Conn.). Collected and compiled by J. W. Barber.*

<sup>4</sup> *The History of New Haven Colony*, by Edward Elias Atwater.

John Potter "the house & home lott & lands that was his fathers, except a small peece of meddow that is in Solatary Cove." Isaac had evidently begun to speculate in real estate as he sold this house and lot at a profit the next year.

At a meeting of the General Court held a few years earlier:

"The Governor informed the Court that the principal occasion of this meeting is aboute fences, to wish men to remember the Orders allready made & hasten the mending of their fences that men may not be discouraged in their sowing & the Court by vote declared that the Orders aboute fences stand as they were & that swine have their libertie to goe abroade as formerly ordered:

"Whereupon the Court chose veiwers for the fences out of each qut. viz."

"Isaack Beecher" was chosen as one of the two "veiwers" for his quarter section. It may have been this job which gave him the knowledge which enabled him successfully to speculate in real estate. The land he bought and sold was in the quarter section for which he was official fence inspector.

At a Court held the year before Hannah Beecher's death "Isack Beecher" and four other men were granted permission for a period of ten years to grow "hopps on half an acre of land each between two brooks near West Rock . . . hopps being much wanting." This privilege was apparently granted without charge.

At a meeting held in 1660—two years after Hannah Beecher's death—the records disclose that "Isaac Beacher & Timothy Nash for absence at a Towne Meeting Apr. 23 were fined each 2s, 6d." Again two years later after various citizens had presented excuses and been excused for not attending the last town meeting the record reveals that "Isaack Beacher's answr by ye Marshall was yt he would pay his fine." Surely these derelictions would not have occurred had Isaac's mother been living. In any case, there is no record of Isaac's having missed a meeting during her lifetime. But Isaac Beecher seems to have been a man of initiative and enterprise even though he did occasionally absent himself from town meetings after his mother's death.

"Interesting relics in pottery of the anti-slavery cult are to be found in Staffordshire ware, on which pictures by Cruikshank, or other illustrators of Mrs. Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, were used as decoration. These subject pictures were in printed or penciled style with floral borders, whole services being thus decorated.

"It was also quite usual to depict rural scenes or the country-seats of county families at this time. Mrs. Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* was published in England in 1852; the first edition with Cruikshank's illustrations is now scarce, and the book was so popular that not only was the Staffordshire ware decorated with scenes in the cabin and on the plantations, but even such pictures were printed on popular wall-papers. No. v. shows two panels of extraordinary interest. Printed in color, there are six different scenes, each measuring ten inches by seven inches with frames and border; the examples shown were hung in the 'fifties in a room at Crotter House, County Kerry, where the late Lord Kitchener was born; the other four scenes are similar in character. These relics, which are valuable both from the subject represented and the former ownership in connection with Lord Kitchener, were removed from the wall, a few years ago, by the incumbent of the parish in Ireland.

"It must be remembered that complete emancipation was at first kept studiously in the background, the avowed aim being abolition of the slave market alone. This latter was explained with every possible appeal to moral principle and human feeling, and vividly set forth in pamphlets, newspaper articles, personal communications and in trifles with pictorial representations, such as in Josiah Wedgwood's cameos and seal. . . . *The Connoisseur*, London, November, 1933."<sup>6</sup>

An article entitled, "Uncle Tom is Dead," by Elizabeth Corbett appeared in the *Theatre Guild Magazine* in 1931 which stated that after a run of seventy-seven years—the longest run in history—*Uncle Tom's Cabin* was finally taken off the boards. This article was widely copied in the daily press. A few days after an extract from it had appeared in a New York paper, a correspondent wrote that there was an "Uncle Tom" company playing in his town. So apparently "Uncle Tom" was not dead after all. And then came the Players' Club revival headed by Otis Skinner which, after a phenomenal success in New York in the spring of 1933, was given in Hartford, Boston and Philadelphia. The opening performance in Boston was attended by Cordelia Macdonald who, as Cordelia Howard, played little Eva when the play was first presented at the Troy Museum in Troy, New York, in 1852.

*Poem by John Greenleaf Whittier read at Mrs. Stowe's seventieth birthday at Newtonville, Massachusetts, June 14, 1881:*

Thrice welcome from the land of flowers  
And golden-fruited orange bowers  
To this sweet, green-turfed June of ours!

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<sup>6</sup> From material collected by T. Henry Foster.

To her, who in our evil time  
Dragged into light the nation's crime,  
With strength beyond the strength of men,  
And, mightier than their sword, her pen;  
To her who world-wide entrance gave  
To the log cabin of the slave,  
Made all his wrongs and sorrows known,  
And all earth's languages his own!—  
Welcome from each and all to her  
Whose Wooing of the Minister  
Revealed the warm heart of the man  
Beneath the creed-bound Puritan.  
And taught the kinship of the love  
Of man below and God above.  
To her, whose vigorous pencil strokes  
Sketched into life her Oldtown Folks;  
Whose fireside stories, grave or gay,  
In quaint Sam Lawson's vagrant way,  
With old New England's flavor rife,  
Waifs from her rude idyllic life,  
Are racey as the legends old  
By Chaucer or Boccaccio told.  
To her who keeps through change of place  
And time her native strength and grace,  
Alike where warm Sorrento smiles,  
Or where, by birchen-shaded isles  
Whose summer winds have shivered o'er  
The icy drift of Labrador,  
She lifts to light the priceless Pearl  
Of Harpswell's angel-beckoned girl:—  
To her at three-score years and ten  
Be tributes of the tongue and pen,  
Be honor, praise and heart-thanks given  
The loves of earth, the hopes of Heaven!  
Ah! dearer than the praise that stirs  
The air today, our love is hers!  
She needs no guarantee of fame  
Whose own is linked with Freedom's name.  
Languages after ours shall keep  
Her memory living while we sleep;  
The waves that wash our gray coast lines,  
The winds that rock the Southern pines,  
Shall sing of her; the unending years  
Shall tell her tale in unborn ears.  
And when, with sins and follies past,  
Are numbered color-hate and caste,  
White, black and red shall own as one  
The noblest work by woman done.

*Poem written and read by Oliver Wendell Holmes on the same occasion:*

If every tongue that speaks her praise  
 For whom I shape my tinkling phrase  
     Were summoned to the table,  
 The vocal chorus that would meet  
 Of mingling accents harsh or sweet  
 From every land and tribe would beat  
     The polyglots of Babel.

Briton and Frenchman, Swede and Dane,  
 Turk, Spaniard, Tartar of Ukraine,  
     Hidalgo, Cossack, Cadi,  
 High Dutchman and Low Dutchman too,  
 The Russian Serf, the Polish Jew,  
 Arab, Armenian and Mantchoo  
     Would shout, "We know the lady."

Know her! Who knows not Uncle Tom?  
 And her he learned his gospel from  
     Has never heard of Moses;  
 Full well the brave black hand we know  
 That gave to Freedom's grasp the hoe  
 That killed the weed that used to grow  
     Among the southern roses.

When Archimedes, long ago,  
 Spake out so grandly, "*dos pou sto,*  
     Give me a place to stand on,  
 I'll move your planet for you now,"—  
 He little dreamed or fancied how  
 The *sto* at last should find its *pou*  
     For woman's faith to land on.

Her lever was the wand of art,  
 Her fulcrum was the human heart,  
     Whence all unfailing aid is;  
 She moved the earth! Its thunders pealed  
 Its mountains shook, its temples reeled,  
 The blood-fed fountains were unsealed,  
     And Moloch sunk to Hades.

All through the conflict, up and down,  
 Marched Uncle Tom and Old John Brown,  
     One ghost, one form ideal,  
 And which was false, and which was true,  
 And which was mightier of the two,  
 The wisest sibyl never knew,  
     For both alike were real.

Sister, the holy maid does well  
 Who counts her beads in convent cell,  
     Where pale devotion lingers;  
 But she who serves the sufferer's needs,  
 May trust the Lord will count her beads,  
     As well as human fingers.

When Truth herself was Slavery's slave,  
 Thy hand the prisoned suppliant gave,  
     The rainbow wings of fiction,  
 And Truth, who soared, descends today  
 Bearing an angel's wreath away,  
     Its lilies at that feet to lay  
     With heaven's own benediction.

### **WHEN I AWAKE I AM STILL WITH THEE**

Still, still with Thee, when purple morning breaketh,  
     When the bird waketh and the shadows flee;  
 Fairer than morning, lovelier than the daylight,  
     Dawns the sweet consciousness, *I am with Thee!*

Alone with Thee, amid the mystic shadows,  
     The solemn hush of nature newly born;  
 Alone with Thee in breathless adoration,  
     In the calm dew and freshness of the morn.

As in the dawning o'er the waveless ocean  
     The image of the morning star doth rest,  
 So in this stillness Thou beholdest only  
     Thine image in the waters of my breast.

Still, still with Thee! as to each new-born morning  
     A fresh and solemn splendor still is given,  
 So doth this blessed consciousness, awaking,  
     Breathe, each day, nearness unto Thee and heaven.

When sinks the soul, subdued by toil, to slumber,  
     Its closing eye looks up to Thee in prayer;  
 Sweet the repose beneath the wings o'ershading,  
     But sweeter still to wake and find Thee there.

So shall it be at last, in that bright morning  
     When the soul waketh and life's shadows flee;  
 O, in that hour, fairer than daylight dawning,  
     Shall rise the glorious thought, *I am with Thee!*

I have given no account of George Beecher's life because his tragedy terminated it on its threshold. He was one of the most gifted members of the family. He had shown talent both as a preacher and organizer but, cut off in the early thirties, his life was one of much promise and little achievement. Such being the case, it seemed to me there would be a certain unfairness in giving a sketch of a life which had barely begun inevitably to be compared with the completed careers of his brothers and sisters.

## 6

## WE ARE ON OUR JOURNEY HOME

We are on our journey home,  
Where Christ our Lord is gone;  
We shall meet around his throne,  
When he makes his people one,  
In the new Jerusalem.

We can see that distant home  
Tho' clouds rise dark between;  
Faith views the distant dome,  
And a lustre flashes keen,  
From the new Jerusalem.

Oh, glory shining far,  
From the never setting Sun!  
Oh, trembling morning Star!  
Our journey's almost done,  
To the new Jerusalem.

Oh, holy heavenly home!  
Oh, rest eternal there!  
When shall the exiles come  
Where they cease from earthly care,  
In the new Jerusalem.

Our hearts are breaking now  
Those mansions fair to see;  
O Lord! Thy heavens bow,  
And raise us up with Thee,  
To the new Jerusalem.

"This country is inhabited by saints, sinners and Beechers.  
The Beechers lived in the following places:

Amherst, Massachusetts  
Andover, Massachusetts  
Batavia, New York  
Boston, Massachusetts  
Brooklyn, New York  
Brunswick, Maine  
Burlington, Iowa  
Charleston, South Carolina  
Chicago, Illinois  
Cincinnati, Ohio  
Dubuque, Iowa  
Elmira, New York  
Farmington, Connecticut  
Fort Wayne, Indiana  
Franklin, Massachusetts  
Galesburg, Illinois  
Georgetown, Massachusetts  
Guilford, Connecticut  
Hartford, Connecticut  
Jacksonville, Illinois  
Lawrenceburg, Indiana  
Lenox, Massachusetts  
Litchfield, Connecticut  
Mandarin, Florida  
Matteawan, New York  
Middletown, Connecticut  
Milwaukee, Wisconsin  
Newark, New Jersey  
Newbern, North Carolina  
New Haven, Connecticut  
New London, Connecticut  
New Orleans, Louisiana  
Newport, Florida  
Newport, Rhode Island  
North Brookfield, Massachusetts  
Owego, New York  
Peekskill, New York  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania  
Poughkeepsie, New York

Putnam, Ohio  
Quincy, Illinois  
Rochester, New York  
Salisbury, Connecticut  
Toledo, Ohio  
Wysox, Pennsylvania  
Euclid, Ohio  
Indianapolis

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#### AMERICAN FIRST EDITIONS

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#### HARRIET (ELIZABETH) BEECHER STOWE

1811-1896

The importance of Mrs. Stowe can be said to be historical rather than literary. Her influence came through books on the slavery question, presumably novels, but actually anti-slavery propaganda. *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and *Dred* are said to have been accelerating influences in the great Civil War.

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